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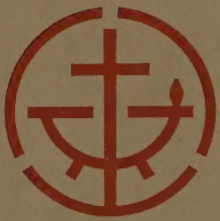

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SOME VIEWS OF MODERN THEOLOGY

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SOME VIEWS

OF

MODERN THEOLOGY

Being a Series of Sixteen Sermons on
Vital Questions concerning the
belief of Christians

By

EDWARD W. LEWIS, M.A., B.D.

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TO MY WIFE

at which the subject of the previous Sunday evening's discourse was discussed; the experiment was eminently successful, not only in point of the numbers who manifested an interest in such conferences, but especially in the sympathy and keenness and intelligence of the debates.

The author's indebtedness for certain fundamental conceptions to Dr Fairbairn and Canon Moberly is obvious, and is cordially acknowledged: also to Rev. R. J. Campbell, here and there, for certain striking phrases (and the gift of a striking phrase accurately embodying a basal thought is second only to the gift, to a discussion, of the thought itself); and he ventures to hope that the too generous request on the part of many friends for the issue of this volume may not be held to be entirely without justification.

CLAPHAM, *October* 1904.

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SOME VIEWS OF MODERN THEOLOGY

I

CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD

"The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us."
—JOHN i. 14.

Do you believe that Christ was a God, and the Son of God, or that He was only a good man?

PARTS of this question admit of simple and brief replies; I do not believe that Christ is a God; for the very phrase suggests that there might be other gods beside Him; and I believe that there is but One God; for there would be no God for me were He not infinite, self-existent, and perfect; and there can only be one Being of whom these attributes can be predicated; there cannot be, for example, two infinite beings; so that if God is infinite, there cannot be another God. Whatever therefore Christ is, He cannot be a God among other gods; for by His very nature the only Being that I can conceive of as God must be unique; One is God and beside Him there is no other.

Neither do I believe that Christ was only a good man. That He was a good man, in the widest sense of the term, goes without saying; and there are many elements in His life as it is known to us which

require naught but His perfect goodness to explain; His wide sympathy, for example; His infinite compassion; His unswerving loyalty; His matchless courage. But there are deep elements in the life of Christ, and in the consciousness of Christ, as revealed to us not only in His words and in His works, but also in His whole attitude towards God and His relation to the Father, which cannot possibly be explained on the supposition that He was only a good man. The explanation of Christ as a historical figure, in the midst of his historical environment, is impossible as I believe apart from the supposition that in his whole personality there were elements that transcended both the goodness and the manhood of an individual.

It is no proof, but it is at any rate a suggestive test; take the best man that the world has known; and idealise his goodness to the furthest limits possible to manhood; and you will find that many of the words of Christ would have no meaning upon such lips; and the place which Christ fills in the development of humanity is one which such a man could never fill. Christ was not merely a good man; nor was He merely an ideally good man; in fact when you come to reflect you will see that it was not His goodness that was the primary thing about Christ; such goodness as His itself needs explaining; "He who knew no sin."

So that, supposing the alternatives in the question are exhaustive, I believe that Christ was the Son of God. But this is only a name, a title, a symbol; and the reality which it symbolises is the deepest and most fundamental fact in the universe.

You will at once understand me when I say that the use of the word "Son" does not at all signify that the physical relation between a human father

and a human son has the remotest meaning in respect of the relation between God the Father and Christ. The words "one-begotten" and "only begotten" have a meaning; but a meaning which has absolutely nothing to do with the physical fact they indicate. "God is Spirit."

You will understand also that the name "Son of God" does not only, or even chiefly, apply to Christ as manifest in the flesh; the historical Jesus existed at a definite time and in a definite place, but the Son of God, who was incarnate in Jesus, and appeared in human form upon the earth plane, existed with God from before the foundations of the earth.

It becomes necessary, therefore, for me to state as clearly as I can, what I mean when I say that Christ is the Son of God.

We say that there is one God; we also say that God is one. And it is a real difficulty with many people to understand how it can be that God should be One, and at the same time a Trinity; how can God be One, and at the same time Three? I do not intend to answer that question fully to-night; it is not germane to our subject; all that I am anxious to impress upon you is, that it is the very terms which we use which make half the difficulty; for when we speak of "Father" and "Son" we think of two quite separate and distinct individualities each outside the other; and we wonder how God the Father, and God the Son can possibly be One God. As a matter of fact the words "Father" and "Son" and "Spirit" are simply names which we are obliged to use if we are to think about God at all; but the very use of the name brings God under a limit as it were: and makes our conception imperfect; and if we argue from an imperfect conception we are sure to get into difficulties.

Will you run over in your mind some things which we ordinarily speak of as being unities: for example, the solar system; we say that it is a unity, it is one, complete, harmonious system; but we know well that within the solar system there are many differences; there are differences of force, one being centre-seeking, and the other centre-fleeing; there are differences of form; of direction; one star differeth from another star: one is sun, others are satellites; one emits light, others reflect light; some are stationary, others are wanderers; and the different parts of the system bear different relations to one another; our earth bears a different relation to the moon, from that which it bears to the sun, and so forth; so that within the system which is one, a unity, there are manifold differences; in point of fact it is because there are differences that unity is possible.

Or again; we speak of a chord of music as being one; but you know well that within the unity of the chord there are different notes, representing different sounds; and also different tones representing different qualities of sound. It is because of these differences that the chord is a unity.

You can predicate identity of that which is single, —a note, for example; but you can only predicate unity of that which, like a chord, is not single and homogeneous, but is complex and capable of relations within itself.

Or again; a family is a unity; but the unity of the family consists in the combination of different internal relations; there is husband and wife: that is one relation within the family; there is parent and child: a quite different relation; there is brother and sister: quite a different relation again; and these relations are not exclusive, for the same person

is both father and husband; and the same person is both sister and child.

There could not be a family if all were fathers, or if all were brothers; for the idea "father" has no meaning apart from the idea "son"; and the idea "husband" has no meaning apart from the idea "wife"; one element in a relation has no existence apart from the other element; so that the eternal and inviolable oneness of the family consists in the fact that it is capable of relations within itself; because it signifies different functions and different persons which are all so interrelated with one another as to be a single whole. It is the differences within the family which constitute and make possible the unity of the family.

Or, as a final example, take a flower; there is a unity in a flower; the flower is one; one life, one purpose, links all its parts together; but there are parts; there are roots, stem, leaves, petals, pollen, seeds; different forms, and different functions; all interrelated with each other; and it is this interrelation between different parts and different functions which makes the unity of the flower; it would not be a flower if it were all root or all blossom; the differences themselves constitute the possibility of the unity. A flower is one because it is capable of relations within itself.

And when we say that God is One we mean something like that: we mean that within the totality of God there are differences; which it is perhaps best to call differences of areas of consciousness; and these differences are all interrelated; they do not exist separately and alone; they have only existence in relation to the whole within which they exist; and in relation to one another. When, for purposes of thought, we make an abstraction of one of these

different elements and look at it in itself, we give it a name; and so we speak of "Father," "Son," and "Spirit." But these are names given to abstractions in thought, they do not denote separate entities, separate individualities and mutually exclusive; as Christ said, "I am in the Father, and the Father in Me." So that the first meaning that we attach to God the Son is that He is one of several elements within the Godhead by reason of the interrelation of which with each other we are able to speak of God as a unity.

This is the Christ which was within the bosom of the Father from before the foundations of the world. But perhaps we are most interested in what took place at and after the foundation of the earth; in other words, what is the relation between this Son within the Godhead, and the Christ of history.

Here we must pause to think for a moment what creation means from the side of God. To put it in one word, it is incarnation. God incarnates, clothes in materiality, Himself in the things which He has made, or as it is better to say, the things which He is causing to become. It is difficult to determine why God should ever have created anything; but it is not difficult to see that when once God moved to create, that creation could only be the incarnation of Himself. It is not necessary to suppose that the whole round of Deity is incarnate in creation as we know it, but it is necessary to say that if creation is the act of God, then it must incarnate some part at any rate of Himself.

Work it out on a lower plane and then raise the argument. In a certain real sense we are creators; secondary creators, maybe; and working under severe limitations; but in a certain real sense we are creators.

Here am I living out my life; what do I mean when I say that? I do not mean that I am merely inhaling and exhaling breath, or eating and drinking and sleeping; but I mean that I am constantly acting, and willing, and imagining, and pressing forward to a mark of high calling.

Now, as I live out my life, there is a certain outward portion of it that you see and can appreciate; you know some of my thoughts, you see my actions; you can read something of my character; and you can judge of my ideals from the general course of my life so far as it is manifest before you; and you judge of me through these things, thoughts, actions, character, ideals, which you can see: you judge of the inner Me through the outward Me. And you are justified in so doing, but why?

Because my inner self is embodied in these outward manifestations. I cannot express my whole personality in thought; but it is true that every thought to which I give expression is, in so far as it is *my* thought, the embodiment of a part of myself, and every action which is really mine, is also an embodiment of myself; in fact, the whole of this outer life of mine which you see is, so far as I am responsible for it, the expression of my inner self which you do not see; my real personality; in other words, the outer life is the incarnation in thoughts and words and deeds and character, of the inner Me.

There is a real sense, as I have already said, in which I am the maker of my thoughts, and my deeds, and my character; and what I want you to understand is, that nothing can in any sense be my creation which is not the embodiment or the incarnation outside of me, of that which already existed within me.

The personality of each of you is surrounded by an intricate network of appearances; which you are perpetually weaving by means of inner energies, and in the direction of inner impulses; each personality of you is surrounded by these encasements of created thoughts and actions and manifold expressions; which indeed are nothing else than the incarnation of You, the Spiritual personal You.

You may often enough give expression to thoughts which are not your own; and many of your actions may be determined: but if you do ever create a thought, that thought can only be the embodiment of some aspect of your Self; if it were not so it could not really be yours.

Now lift this matter up and apply it to God in creation. It is not necessary to suppose that the whole personality of God is revealed in creation, as we know it; but if creation, as we know it, is the act of God it must of necessity be the outward expression of at any rate a portion of the inner nature, the inner life, the Self of God. If it was necessary for God to create, He could only create that which, being without the Godhead, would express and reveal the inner nature and the inner relations within the Godhead.

Now will you come to this point of view, and I will purposely limit the scope that the thought may be simpler.

We are contemplating humanity; when I use the word humanity you know what I mean; you think of men and women, of all the men and women that ever were; you think of humanity as one whole organic, living, interrelated being, the crown and glory of creation; you think of a spiritual something which is the matrix of your own manhood and womanhood.

Well, we say God created humanity. What does that involve?

If all the creation of God is the outward expression of some aspect of the divine nature, or if you like, of some idea within the divine mind; an idea which existed from eternity with God, but which He has incarnated in creation under the limits of space and time; then created humanity must be the expression of part of the whole nature of Deity; and there must have been an area of the divine nature from everlasting which corresponds to created humanity; there must be a certain side of the nature of God in which as idea, or ideal, this humanity has been present in germ and in potency from before the beginnings.

If humanity is the creation of God, then it must be the outward expression of what, with propriety, we may call the human side of God's eternal nature. Humanity is the incarnation of the human side of God.

Will you connect up the two thoughts; we speak of God as One, because of the existence within the totality of His nature of different functions or aspects or areas of consciousness, each with an identity of its own; and one of these we speak of as God the Son, in distinction from the Father and the Holy Spirit. That is one thought: God the Son as a definite area of consciousness within the total life of God.

In creation, God has incarnated a portion at least of His whole Being; and it is this area which within the Godhead we speak of as God the Son, which, being incarnated, and limited to conditions of time and space, is humanity.

God the Son, eternally existent within the Nature of the Godhead, therefore, is to be regarded as "living a self-limited life in the life of humanity"; humanity

is the incarnation of God the Son. And all humanity is summed up in Christ who is the head and the ideal.

The rest is easy.

All creation is incarnation; it is the incarnate life of the eternal Son; but by reason of the limits under which it is made manifest it necessarily appears not as perfect and complete, but as imperfect, and progressing towards completion. Of this progress there must be a consummation; and Jesus Christ is the culmination of the process by which God the Son is realising His incarnate life in humanity.

With these thoughts in your minds will you remember again the words of the first chapter of St John's gospel: "In the beginning was the Son; and the Son was with God, and the Son was God; the same was in the beginning with God; all things were made through Him; and without Him was not anything made. That which hath been made, was life in Him, and the life was the light of men. And the Son became flesh and tabernacled among us; and we beheld His glory, glory as of an only begotten from a father—full of grace and truth."

I believe that Christ the Son of God, as existing with God from before the foundations of the earth, is the ideal humanity which from everlasting has been potentially present within the nature of the Deity. And I believe that Christ, as He was made manifest to men, is that potential become actual, is that ideal become incarnate on our earth plane, in order that we, seeing in Him the mark of our upward calling, may live our lives in obedience, and so grow up in all things into Him who is the Head, into the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

Prayer

O eternal and ever blessed God, our Father through Jesus Christ, grant unto us, we beseech Thee, unto whom Thou hast revealed Thy life in the Incarnate Son, that we may so walk in faith and obedience as at the last to be found in Thee, through the power of Thine Eternal Love."

II

THE PERSONALITY OF GOD AND HUMAN AFFAIRS

"One God and Father of all who is over all and through all, and in all."—EPH. iv. 6.

Do you believe that God is a personality Who interferes in human affairs?

LET us take a few examples of the type of illustration which spring at once to the mind on the suggestion of this question.

We think of Abraham taking his son Isaac, and making a journey to a place that should be showed him, and there erecting an altar and preparing for sacrifice; and when his arm was raised to slay the victim, his son, even his only son, Isaac, a voice from the heaven cried unto him, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad."

That was God interfering in human affairs.

Or we think of a battle in ancient story in which the enemies of the chosen people were being driven like chaff before the swords of the faithful; and the day was too short to complete the slaughter, and annihilate the foe; and the leader prayed; and in answer to his prayer the day was prolonged, for the sun was made to stand still upon Gibeon.

That was God, as a personality, interfering with the regular ordinary course of nature for the purpose of specially influencing human affairs.

And while it is true that this interference was on

the part of a national god;—for the children of Israel recognised that other nations had their gods who fought for them, only Jehovah, the God of Israel, was greater than the gods of the other peoples, and among their gods none was like unto Him; so that their conception of God's action was rendered imperfect by reason of their imperfect conception of God's nature, and the behaviour of Jehovah in the affairs of the children of Israel is vastly similar to the picture we have of the way in which Jove and the other gods of Olympus interfered in, and arranged many of the details of, the war between Greece and Troy; while all this is so, the idea of such special interference on the part of God in human affairs is still widespread among us, who have a nobler and purer and truer conception of God; and we order prayers to be said in our churches that God would favour our arms against the enemy; and at the present moment, while nobody perhaps actually expects it, there are many people who believe that it is quite possible that God should interfere from outside in the Macedonian question, and vindicate His own righteousness in the presence of a mute and impotent Christendom.

I do not think that anybody believes that our ultimate success in South Africa was due to any special interference on the part of God in answer to the prayers of the churches; and, as I have said, I do not think that many people expect that there will be any direct, special, interference on the part of God on behalf of the distressed Christians in the near East. If the British government should interfere in this matter from purely disinterested motives, I can conceive that such action might be well interpreted from the side of God as being due to His working; but that would by no means be the same thing as

that form of interference which we are now considering.

Of those instances of special interference which occur to our minds most readily and which are to be found in such profusion in the Old Testament, it is only necessary that I should say this; that there seems no valid reason why the actual, historical basis of many of such narratives should be denied; but that the explanation of historical events depends upon the conception of nature, and the conception of God, and the conception of God's relation to nature held by the historian; and if those conceptions are known to be imperfect, the explanation will inevitably be either false or incomplete.

When therefore I find a historian, whose theology and whose natural science must, by reason of his place in the development of human knowledge be of necessity imperfect, attributing a national triumph to the special interference of God in the world-order, I am quite willing to admit that such an explanation, which I may deem either imperfect or even false, may have both a moral and a spiritual value for the time, but it is not therefore to be accepted as true by me who have a conception of God and a view of nature with which such an explanation is utterly inconsistent.

Upon some such line as that should I reply to an objector who might say. "We know that God interferes with human affairs, for he did so in the case of Abraham, Joshua, and the rest."

In such cases the suggestion of God's interference attaches wholly to the interpretation which the early historian put upon certain events; and I may accept the fact of the national triumph without admitting the validity of the explanation.

If a primitive man hides grain in trenches sur-

rounding the grave of a dead father, and pours over it blood and wine; and in after days receives a return of that which he gave, thirty, sixty, or a hundred fold; this fact may be explained by the worshipper as being the direct gift to him, and a direct favour to him personally, from the spirit of the departed, who manipulates the secret processes of nature to the advantage of his votary. I do not accept the explanation, although I accept the fact of the multiplication of the grain; because the explanation is inconsistent with my view of nature. And yet the explanation which I would give, equally with that which the primitive man would give, need not exclude the action of higher and unseen powers.

It will have already been concluded by you that I do not believe in this interference on the part of God in human affairs, in the crude and mechanical form which the illustrations I have used suggest. But we are at present too much on the surface of things; and we must go deeper if we are to get to solid standing ground. For it is not a question of my opinion against that of the writer of the book of Joshua for example; it is a question of a true idea of God's nature, and His relation to the creation He has made.

Let us handle the word "interfere," and turn the idea over in our minds. What does it suggest?

It suggests in the first place that God's relation to creation and humanity is intermittent.

I am a child in school and am doing an exercise; the master sits at his desk; or busies himself with others; is quiescent so far as I am concerned, and lets me go on with the exercise as best I can; then suddenly he comes round, and finds that I am not doing it correctly and interferes.

Or I am a workman, labouring at a piece of work;

from time to time my employer comes round and looks at what I am doing; and if it is not going as he would like, he pushes me aside, stands in my place, breaks this, pieces that, and generally puts the thing right and goes off again.

Or I am the owner of a factory, and at certain times in the year an inspector comes along and investigates; and if I am overstepping the limits of what the law permits, he interferes.

The idea of God's interference suggests this intermittent action on His part in the affairs of men. And my conception of God's relation to His creation can give no place to such an idea as that.

I have no idea of God as an employer leaving His workers alone so long as the work is going straight, and interfering when they are in difficulties or are going wrong.

I have no idea of God as a kind of government official with the right of entry into this world-factory, for the purpose of seeing that certain preordained rules are observed, and that certain limits are kept.

I have no idea of God sitting afar on some serene Olympian height impassively surveying the progress of human affairs, and every now and again descending and interfering in them; when His particular friends are being worsted; or as the arbiter in disputes, the great settler of quarrels, the great patcher up of wrong or inferior work. The idea is incongruous with my conception of God; as soon as it enters my mind, a host of hostile ideas summarily ejects it.

This idea of interference is closely connected with the idea of God building up creation as a huge mechanism, something like a watchmaker will make a watch. The watchmaker fashions the parts, fits them together; sets the mechanism going, and hangs

it up; retires, so far as that watch is concerned, and keeps aloof from it, until something goes wrong; or the watch runs down; then he interferes; cleans it; adjusts the faulty parts; winds it up again; and leaves it alone until once more it requires mending.

So God is thought of as building up the universe; fashioning it part by part, and fitting the parts together; and then as Prime Mover setting the world going; and then standing aloof from His creation; retaining a certain authority over it; but that authority being in practice limited to the right of entry, the right of interference, in case there happens, or promises to happen, something which is contrary to His will; in which case He descends, as it were, and with the infinite power of omnipotence sets things to rights, and forthwith leaves the world again to itself, until such further interference as He shall deem necessary may be called for.

This is a time-honoured view; and doubtless is a popular conception at the present day. I cannot here elaborate any arguments against such a view; I can only say that those of you who may hold that view will have to give a satisfactory answer to some such questions as these:—

During these periods of aloofness, between these intermittent interferences with the universe, where is God; and what is the life He is living?

In what way can you conceive of God now attaching Himself to, and now detaching Himself from, the universe; consistently with its remaining as we know it is a continuous order?

When was, and what is the evidence for, the last historical interference of God in human affairs? And during these periods of absence from the world, in what way are we to have living knowledge of, and

living communion with Him, in whom you acknowledge our life is?

How is it to be accounted for that on some occasions, seemingly trivial enough, *e.g.*, in order that a bloodthirsty army might drink its fill of slaughter, God interferes; and on other occasions, *e.g.*, when a Christian nation is being ruthlessly outraged, and decimated, and human agencies of deliverance are bound and gagged, God does not interfere?

And if, during this period of God's absence or God's sleep, the world goes wrong and awry, how are you going to justify Him in regard of the pain, and the shame, and the ignominy which the process of righting the wrong must inevitably entail?

And how are you going to get men to worship and honour and love such a God who alternates between inactivity and sudden irruption from without; between indifference and anger?

I believe that these questions are unanswerable; if God never comes into touch with His world save in the way of interference, how can He claim the service and the honour and the love of men? You may say that He only interferes in the direction of righting wrong, and mending imperfections: but that can possibly be no merit to Him, if it is His absence and aloofness which makes the wrong and the imperfection possible?

The idea of interference on the part of God in human affairs is wrong, because it has its roots in a false conception of the nature of God. True the world is dependent upon God; but it is not dependent upon Him for interference, but for the continuous communication of life.

And there is another thing. God interferes in His creation; why? He would not interfere if it were going right, for there would be no need for inter-

ference. He interferes because it is not going right; because if it were not for His interference, the world would go increasingly wrong, and soon be rushing to its destruction. That is involved in the idea of interference.

The world is such a weak, unstable, imperfect, thing that as soon as God takes His eye off it, as it were, retires and leaves it alone, it begins to go wrong, to roll downhill towards the abyss.

Do you see the difficulties into which we are being brought under this view? It represents God as creating a world so inherently weak, so essentially bad, that as soon as it is left to itself it begins to fall to pieces, and to go wrong; and God has got to interfere to stop the inevitable disaster.

It regards God as having created a world, a universe, which so far from being "very good" is of such a kind that its intrinsic imperfection will bring it to nothing, unless it is continually being put to rights and kept going by the interferences of God. All the resources of infinite wisdom, and of omnipotence have been called into requisition to give form and life to this universe, and that which has been produced is so sorry a thing that it is always going wrong, always requiring readjustment and repair, dependent for its very existence upon the repeated interference of the Master-builder.

Could God possibly have created such a universe? What purpose could such a universe have? what value for eternity? how could it have been worth God's while to create such a universe? and what sort of a God must He be, if this creation represents the flower of His wisdom and the blossom of His power?

The fundamental mistake of this position is that it regards God as external to His creation, building

it up from without; while if there is one truth more clearly written than another upon the face of both earth and heaven as we are able to read to-day, it is that God is *in* His creation; that it is His life that throbs through it, and it is His purpose that is being realised in it.

But if God is immanent in His creation, in what way can it be said that He interferes with it?

Let us get to the standpoint which we occupied last Sunday evening. We saw then that all creation was the incarnation of a certain side or area of the totality of Deity; not the whole round of Godhead is incarnate in creation, but only a part of it; there is more of the life of God than is incarnated in creation. So that God is transcendent above and beyond nature and humanity, as well as immanent in these. And our concluding position last Sunday was that Humanity is the incarnation of the Eternal Son; in humanity as we know it God the Son is living a self-limited life under conditions of time and space.

Let me remind you of the illustration which I used; I spoke of my inner self as embodying itself, and therefore revealing itself, in my outer life of thought and action and character as it appears and is known to you; my outer life which you see is really nothing more or less than the external expression of my inner self which you do not see. Now, will you ask yourself with what propriety you could speak of yourself as interfering in your own life?

You may well be said to interfere with the actions of another; but there would be no meaning in saying that you interfered in your own actions. And how can you interfere with your own thoughts? or your own character? You are in these things from first to last and for ever; there is no sense in speaking of

your interference in those things, in which as a matter of fact you always exist and through which you are constantly expressing the essence of your life.

If the universe were the creation of the devil, or of the device of man, or of some other god, then there would be propriety in speaking of God as interfering with it; but when creation is simply the incarnation of one area of the life of God, when therefore, God is within His creation from first to last and for ever, there is no meaning in speaking of God as interfering.

What then? for my purpose is chiefly constructive; and I am only destructive of such positions as I conceive to be wrong, in order that the way may be clear for the construction of another position. If God is not to be regarded as interfering in His creation, must He therefore be relegated to a position of permanent aloofness, and the creation, once created, be completely independent of Him, His life, and His will? By no means. When I refuse the idea of interference to God's relation to the world, I do not mean that He is in no relation at all to the world; that is not the alternative. I mean that God is so absolutely the very life and soul and breath of His creation, I mean that the life of humanity is so utterly, so completely, so constantly dependent upon Him; I mean that creation from lowest to highest, in all its length and breadth could not have had, and cannot have, any existence outside the life of God; so that to speak of interference is absurd; for God cannot be said to interfere in that in which He is always present, always acting.

I want this thought to burn into your brain, for it is fundamental in all right thinking concerning God's nature and His relation to us.

God is transcendent above creation in the sense

that a part only and not the whole being of God is incarnate in creation; God is not transcendent in the sense that He is far above, separate from, outside of, aloof from, His creation. God is not one entity, and the world another entity, each separate and distinct, each mutually exclusive; so that God can be conceived of as coming down from His high place and interfering with the world, like the gods came down from Olympus and mixed with mortals on the plain of Troy; God is in His creation; and in the life of the world, and in the progressive life of humanity, God is thinking His thoughts, working His purpose, realising His life.

Can God therefore influence the life of the world? Undoubtedly; indeed it is only by reason of the constant, permanent, persistent influence of God that there is any life of the world at all. But this permanent influence on the world from within, is as far as the poles removed from the idea of intermittent interference from without.

In his reply to this question, Dr Horton says that God so far interferes as that if He did not perpetually interfere in human affairs, there would be no human affairs to interfere in. We mean the same thing, I imagine. The word interference is a bad one, and should not be retained for the sake of bolstering up a prejudice, and interference which is perpetual, is no longer interference in any real sense. I would rather say, God influences human affairs to this extent that were it not that He is constantly communicating His life, and constantly realising Himself in the life of humanity, that life would cease to be; would have no meaning.

But can God exert special influence? When God's influence is constant and permanent it seems useless to speak of special influence. But let us

think for a minute about our own selves in relation to our lives.

There seems to be no question but that, within certain limits, I am able to give definite direction to my life; to follow certain paths, and to avoid others; to realise certain desires and to quench others; to reinforce my life in certain definite directions, to the accomplishment of certain ends. In other words, it seems clear that I can exert strain in my life towards the realisation of certain things with which I identify myself. All this from within; moving from the central core of my life, my Self.

If God is regarded therefore as living His life in the life of humanity, it seems clear that it is possible to Him also, and without any of those limitations which thwart and hinder me, to give definite direction to that life; to initiate certain processes, and to inhibit others; to reinforce the development of that life in certain definite directions to the accomplishment of certain ends. And I see no reason why the Omnipotent will of God should not, indeed I see every reason why He should, exert strain within the life of humanity towards the realisation of certain purposes which constitute His whole counsel usward.

But the vitally important thing to remember is that all this is within the life of humanity, and is in no sense an interference from without. So that when I say that God does not interfere in human affairs, I do not mean that human affairs are so completely independent of Him that they are moving forward without any reference whatsoever to His will; on the contrary I mean that they are so completely dependent upon Him, that apart from His life and His will they have no existence and no

meaning; for we believe that He is One God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all and in all.

I am aware that this position suggests many problems; there is the question of prayer; there is the question of miracles; there is the question of the existence of evil; and there is the question of human freedom; we must sooner or later deal with these problems, and approached from the point of view I have tried to disclose to you they admit of suggestive and satisfactory solutions; all that I have wished to impress upon you to-night is the fundamental fact, that the life of humanity is the incarnation of the life of the Son of God, and that therefore so far from being subject to God's intrusion and interference from without, our human affairs derive their meaning, their purpose and their destiny from His indwelling life.

Not interference, but immanence; not intrusion, but indwelling from the beginning; not intermittent, catastrophic, activity from without, but constant upspringing of endless life within. "That which hath been made is life in Him, and the life is the light of men."

Prayer

O ever-living God, apart from whom we have no life and are nothing; enthuse us with divine energies; quicken us with divine grace; that we, submitting ourselves to the control of Thine indwelling Spirit, may ever seek to do the things which are in harmony with Thy most holy will; and so may ever praise Thee, in weakness and in darkness, until the day when perfect knowledge shall produce in us a perfect obedience; and perfect obedience shall be perfect light. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

III

PRAYER AND ITS ANSWER

"Pray without ceasing."—1 Thess. v. 17.

Do you believe in direct answer to prayer?

To this question my answer is a direct and unhesitating affirmative. But the whole matter is so important that such a mere bald answer as that will be quite unsatisfactory. You can never give an answer "yes" or "no" to a great question: some there are who think that such an answer is the best possible, and denotes an amount of certainty and clearness of grasp which cannot be indicated in any other way: there are questions to which an answer "yes" or "no" is the most unsatisfactory possible, there are questions which a whole literature fails to answer, and there are questions to which no answer is possible save the whole life and character of the man.

So that if I should content myself by saying "Yes, I do assuredly believe in direct answer to prayer," and then send you away, not one in a hundred of you would go away satisfied, and it would be a sorrow to me that even so small a proportion as that should be so easily content.

Now, lying behind the idea of prayer you have two great facts, which we must regard as fundamental, and which we cannot admit to be open

questions; perhaps it is not right to regard any question as completely and finally closed, but what I mean is, that if we are to believe at all, and live valuable lives at all, there must be some point at which we must stop and hold and refuse to be pushed further back; many of us may believe more than others, but there must be a minimum belief common to us all and apart from which no truly useful, no truly moral, not to say no truly Christian life can be lived.

For me, those facts are these, this is my starting point. I believe that the life which is manifest in creation from lowest to highest is the life of God; that is what I have been insisting on in both of our previous discussions; creation, from depth to height, is the incarnation of an area, at least, of the life of God. That is one fact.

The other fact is myself; I am here, and I am I. I acquiesce in the limitation of the area of human freedom, I do not think that man is an absolute free agent, but I believe that man has such an amount of freedom as constitutes him a real individual, and a true person. I can impart to a stone an upward motion contrary to gravity without threatening the validity of the law of gravitation and without jeopardising the unity of the solar system. I can conceive of our solar system as a unity with its own peculiar forms and motions and activities, without threatening the unity of the universe, wherein many solar systems steadily abide. I can watch an eddy, or a vortex, on the surface of the stream of a river, can allow to it peculiar motions and forces of its own, and a peculiar direction of its own, without in any way spoiling, or destroying, the unity of the river, which flows from its sources in the mountains to its rest upon the bosom of the sea.

So it is possible for me to regard myself as possessing such an amount of freedom as justifies my regarding myself as a person and not a puppet, as an individual and not an atom, without thereby denying that the life of creation is one, and is the life of God.

So that I have these two facts to start from, God, and Myself. But as soon as I understand that creation of which I am a part is the incarnation of the life of God; as soon as I see that my life is in a very real sense within the life of God, I must add to these two facts—God and Myself—a further idea of the possibility of close relation between them. God does not inhabit one world and Myself another; God's nature is not radically distinct from my own; God's life and mine are not mutually exclusive; if my life is part of the life of creation, and the life of creation is the incarnated life of God, there must at any rate be the possibility of conscious relation between God and Me; there must be a potential relation between God and Me, which may become actually realised in terms of life. So that I say, not merely, God and Myself; but I say, God for Me, and Myself for God.

Now, prayer is the means whereby this relation between God's life and mine becomes actually realised for me, and also for God. Is that not clear—that if your life is a part of that incarnate life of God, which is being realised in creation and cosmic development; if your life, with all that amount of individual freedom apart from which it would not be a man's life at all, is actually and inevitably within the life of God—is it not clear that you cannot live a strong and useful and happy life unless your life is conformable to God, unless your life flows with God's life, unless God's will is the regulative principle of your life: unless the God-life in which creation

lives and moves and has its being, is gradually becoming consciously realised in you?

Now, prayer is the means whereby this communion between my life and God becomes realised. God is for me, and I am for God, and it is in and through prayer that I realise this relation, and turn it into terms of life; it is through the channel of prayer that God realises Himself in me, and that I find myself in God.

The fundamental fact of prayer is communion, and the one purpose of prayer is the realisation of communion between my life and God. Whenever, and to the degree that, such communion is realised, prayer is answered. God comes nearer to you, and you rise nearer to God; and it is this approximation of your life to God, it is this gradual enthusing of your life with the communicated energies of the divine life, which is the ground of the deepest joy, and of the surest hope, that is in human life.

Evidently therefore, if we define prayer as the means whereby the fellowship of the soul with God, the oneness of my life with the life of God, is realised, prayer will not necessarily be the saying of prayers. Words give definiteness to our thoughts, and there are those to whom words make concentration of mind possible, but the words in themselves are nothing. We are all of us sufficiently grown in both intellectual and spiritual understanding to know that God does not hear our words in the same way that we hear them. Underlying the objection which many of you have to set forms of prayer, lies this thought that if words are in any sense divorced from real and earnest thought, or from definite and conscious spiritual attitude, they are meaningless and useless. Which means that it is the real thought and the spiritual attitude which are the chief thing;

and they *are* the chief thing, even when the words are not liturgical but extempore. The real act of prayer is not in the words that are used, but in the attitude of the man towards his God when he is using them. God does not hear the words, but He is infinitely sensitive to the spiritual attitude.

So that prayer is more than the saying of prayers. The utterance of thoughts in words may be true prayer; thinking may also be true prayer; work may be prayer; wrestling with a problem may be prayer; fighting for a noble cause may be prayer; private meditation may be prayer; there is a way of doing the ordinary round, and the daily task of life, as that this shall be true prayer; any act of our lives, whatsoever it may be, if we do it in such a way as to consciously and concentratedly cultivate a spiritual attitude of sympathy and fellowship with God is prayer; and I believe that all such prayer is answered, that is, that it realises the purpose which called it forth.

Now, this is the fundamental thing, and as I go on to speak of certain details you must retain this thought clearly in your mind that the bottom purpose of prayer, that purpose which gives prayer its true meaning and its true value, is communion; it is the means whereby the essential oneness of the human life with the life of God is gradually realised. This is the great thing, the one thing needful; and I think that most of you, however much perplexity may arise with reference to minor details, will agree that if, as the result of prayer, in the sense in which I have defined it, you do find your lives gradually becoming more and more filled with the power and the beauty and the holiness of God, this is the unspeakable gift, with which "all the gifts from all the heights" are given, also.

I am anxious to deal especially with prayer in the form of verbal utterance, for it is to such prayer that most of you will take the question before us to refer.

I find that verbal prayer takes two distinct forms; it may be in the form of adoration; it may be in the form of petition. I will say but a word upon the former, for it is to prayer under the form of petition that the word "answer," as we ordinarily understand it, chiefly applies.

Adoration is real prayer; if I say,

"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty;
Early in the morning our songs shall rise to Thee;
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty;
God in three persons, Blessed Trinity."

or if I say,

"O Jesus King most wonderful;
Thou Conqueror renowned;
O sweetness most ineffable,
In whom all joys are found."

this is real prayer, although I ask for nothing. It is real prayer although, if you were to start to analyse all the expressions used, you might find yourself in the very thick of intellectual perplexity. It is real prayer, because if you use those words with sincerity and in reverence and soul-sensitiveness to God, you cannot fail to experience such pure emotions, and such Godward aspirations as serve to establish and develop in you that spiritual attitude towards God, through which, though it may be only in terms of love and not in terms of understanding, you realise the relation between your soul and Him. In such adoration you bring your soul into the ineffable light of God's presence; you do not seek actively to understand Him, but passively you let your soul lie

in His sight; in quieter and lowly ways you anticipate that ecstasy of which Faber sang,

> "Father of Jesus, God of Love,
> What rapture will it be;
> Prostrate before Thy throne to lie,
> And gaze and gaze on Thee."

You come into the divine presence and let the light shine on you; and divine influences play upon you; you rest in the Lord. That, I say, is real prayer; it fulfils the prime function of prayer; it brings you closer to God; it opens avenues to the inflowing of His life; and such prayer is answered.

Just as the free playing of the sunlight upon a garment cleanses it from lurking impurity; just as the summer sun kisses the apples in the orchard until they blush for very gladness; so is our adoration of Him who is the eternal Light of light answered in the purity, the beauty, and the joy which the sense of His overshadowing presence, and the suffering of His all-embracing influence, give to our lives.

But prayer is also petition; and perhaps to the majority of people prayer means petition and nothing more; it is the asking of things from God. It is the way of obtaining God's blessings for ourselves or for others for whom we pray.

And the blessings for which we ask are of two kinds. There are spiritual blessings, and there are material gifts, things for the soul, and things for the body.

I will speak first of spiritual blessings; and I want you to ask yourselves exactly what it is for which you pray when you pray for spiritual blessings.

You are in the midst of severe temptation, and you pray for strength to resist; you are painfully

conscious of the guilt of your sin, and you pray for forgiveness; or of the pollution of your sin, and you pray for cleansing; or you are having a hard trying life of it, and you pray for patience; or amid many bafflements that threaten your faith, you pray that you may be kept simple and strong in God; or you are always liable to wander, and you pray for more steadfastness of spirit; or you are in the throes of doubt, and you pray for guidance and for light; these are what we mean by spiritual blessings. These are the burdens of multitudes of prayers, we do not all need the same blessing at the same time; we vary in our circumstances, and so we vary in our need; we all need God, but we need Him as it were under a different form, suited to our case.

Can we not unify all these different blessings? May they not be different aspects, or different manifestations of one gift? I think they may be. Put them altogether and say that it is more of the indwelling life of God that we want; Paul called it grace; I mean the same thing.

When we pray for spiritual blessings we are really praying for more of the life of God to dwell in us and abound; our personal need determines the form under which we ask for the gift, but it is the same gift that we all need; the life of God; we want *ourselves* to grow less and less, and our lives to be more and more full of God; we want the life of God to flow more freely through us, as it were. This indwelling life of God is a strengthening power against temptation; it is a cleansing power against the pollution of sin; it is an illuminating power in the midst of difficulties and darkness; it is a power which would mean infinite courage against the pressure of circumstances; and if we had more of the life of God flowing freely within us, intellectual

problems, and moral problems, and social problems might still vex us, but only as the surface waves of the ocean which threaten not, nor disturb, the deep, deep calm beneath.

So that when I pray for spiritual blessings, I feel like this: I feel that my life is being tossed and tormented and hampered and hindered in its right development, by reason of limitations, the pressure of circumstances, the appeals of a lower nature, and the uncertainty of intellectual vision; and I feel as if nothing can save me, unless I do so open myself to the possession of God, unless I do so make way for Him in my life, unless I do so become leavened with His life, saturated with Him, that within my life there is a well of fathomless power to resist, and power to hold, and power to go forward. And all my prayer is bent to the realisation in my conscious life of the inviolable and all-sufficient relation which I know to be possible between God and me.

Here, perhaps, more clearly than elsewhere, you see the prime function of prayer; it is directed towards this consummation;—God sharing His life with me, and my sharing my life with God; that God and I should live a common life; that the meaning and purpose of my life so far as I am able to control it, should be at one with the meaning and purpose of the life which God is living in the world He has made; it is this communion in both its emotional and its practical aspects that is the purpose of prayer. And such prayer is always answered.

It is the unquestionable experience of many a Christian that through prayer strength has come in the hour of temptation, and comfort in the time of trouble, and light out of darkness, and the feeling as of a burden rolled away, reviving and refreshing a life

weighed down with the sense of guilt. If this meeting could be turned on a sudden into an experience meeting, there would be scores of you, sane, healthy-minded, intelligent men and women, who would bear witness to the direct answers in spiritual gifts and reinforcements which you have received in prayer; that it is because of the indwelling, communicated life of God, consciously realised in prayer and through prayer, that you are what you are.

I will anticipate two objections; some of you may be saying, "But cannot these results of prayer in strengthened and purified and uplifted life be accounted for according to well known psychological laws?" You say that if you pray earnestly for strength to resist temptation, that strength comes to you simply through the natural channels of concentration of thought and effort of will; you grow stronger to resist not by reason of a gift of strength from without, but by the development of latent forces within your own life. I believe that this is in a large measure true; but because I can understand the working of a process, do I thereby shut God out of it? Because I can explain a thing, do I therefore eliminate God? I can see natural laws working in the world, but I still say that the life of the world is God's life, because these laws are simply the expression of certain uniformities which I can observe in Nature; the laws do not make the uniformities, the uniformities were there first, and it is they that have to be explained; and our explanation of them is that they are the expression of the mind and the purpose of the Creator. So that the laws of nature which I see working are simply the expression of the will of God; and when I can explain anything by a natural law, I do not

therefore eliminate God, rather do I see God in it. And so, even if all the results of prayer could be explained according to psychological laws, that would not remove God from the sphere of prayer; for it is His will that is realising itself through the law. People sometimes think that all God's acts must be unnatural, or inexplicable; rather is it true that the more truly natural a thing, or a process, is, the more is God manifest in it.

Some others may object, that though they pray earnestly for spiritual blessings, the prayer is not answered; or at any rate the answer is not realised in their lives. This is at times a perplexing problem. Last week I had a letter from a member of the church, in which the writer said that she quite believed that God restored the "years that the locust hath eaten," but she could not feel it, realise it, in her life. That is not an uncommon experience, believing without realising the fruit of the belief in the life; praying in sincerity, and not realising the answer. The only reply to such an objection must be that the answer to some of our prayers may be immediate, we may rise from our knees feeling that the prayer is answered; but others of our prayers may be answered by a process which does not at once consummate itself.

Replying in the columns of the *British Weekly* last week, Mr Campbell answered the question of his correspondent who had prayed long and earnestly for a very dear friend and seemingly without receiving any sign or answer from God, in these words, "Trouble no more; your prayer is answered in heaven." A reply which perhaps to many minds suggests deeper questions than the one it was intended to silence, but which seems to convey this truth, that the answers to our prayers may not

necessarily be immediately received and realised; but may be in the form of a spiritual process which has indeed already been initiated, but can only come to its fruition after many days. And it may be that those of us whose prayers remain unanswered, as it seems, may just be those whose lives need this discipline of patience and faith.

I must still ask for your patient consideration to a few brief words on the question of praying for material gifts.

On a previous occasion I have said to you that in the practice of my private life I do not petition God for material gifts. I have reasons, which though they may not seem cogent to you, are cogent to me. I might be conscious of a very strong desire to possess a certain thing, and my purpose in desiring its possession might be very pure, but I do not feel that I am competent to say whether it would be best for me to possess it; I cannot see far enough ahead, and my perception of the true good may be blurred. On the other hand, the supply of material things in the world is limited; I feel that I can ask God for His grace, and draw from an unfathomable source, without taking to myself what somebody might need more than I; for no drawing from an infinite supply can impoverish it; but the supply of material things is limited—bread, money, positions and so forth—and what I receive another cannot have; and I am haunted by the thought that under the influence of a strong desire and a high ambition, I might ask to receive a gift which, while it would be good for me to have it, another might need far more than I; and I do not think that I am justified in such prayers. So that all my efforts are concentrated upon bringing my life so closely into relation with God, filling it so full of His strength and His light, and making

my will so conformable to His, that it shall not at all matter what befalls me, and alike in joy or sorrow, prosperity or adversity, I shall be capable of a quiet courage, and a patient fidelity, and an inalienable hope.

That is my position, but I willingly acknowledge that the nature and temperament and attitude of many of you may be quite different; it may mean a great deal to you to be able to bring your ordinary life with its daily cares and anxieties and delights into the presence of God; to feel that He has an interest in you in the lowly, as well as in the high, places of life; to feel that your every want is known to Him, that He "hears your sighs and counts your tears." And I say most freely that if such prayers, if this daily laying of your life out in the sight of God, this simple trust in Him for the provision of the basket and the store, if this helps you to realise the nearness of God to you, and the closeness of your life to Him, it is an inestimable good.

If it is along such ways, and through such channels, that you can best realise communion and fellowship with God, then by all means persist.

At the same time I am deeply convinced that the true answer to these prayers is in the realised communion, and the felt presence, and not in the actual receipt of the things asked for.

Mr Jowett in a sermon on "Prayer" said, "I am going to leave nothing out of my prayers that I want to talk about with God. I will banish nothing from my intercourse with God just because it may seem to conflict with the laws of nature. Therefore pray for anything you want to pray about. I do not say that you will receive it; that must be left to the wisdom and to the love of God."

With these words I find myself in heartiest agree-

ment; communion with the life of God, sharing the life of God, is the greatest and deepest need of human life, and for your life's sake you are bound to realise that communion in every best way you can, and if you can best do that by laying before God your daily needs and wants, and asking Him for material gifts, then by all means practise this form of prayer; but mark what Mr Jowett says—"Pray for anything you want to pray about; but I do not say that you will receive it; that must be left to the wisdom and the love of God." The words suggest this thought to me; if I pray to God, say for example, for the life of my child that it may be restored to me from the jaws of a cruel disease; either the life is restored or it is taken; if it is restored I say it is of the wisdom and love of God; if it is taken I still say it is of the wisdom and love of God. I feel that the great thing is, not that my prayer should be answered according to my desire, rather that God's will should be done. I feel therefore that the main purpose of my prayers must be that my life may become at one with the life of God and that my will may be at one with His, so that whatever comes to me, and whether my desires are satisfied or thwarted, His will, infinitely wise and infinitely good, may be done.

Prayer in its soul and essence is not the asking of God for things; it is the way God gives Himself to us, and the way we give ourselves to God. To that everything must be subordinate.

> "Can loving children e'er reprove
> With murmurs those they trust and love?
> My Father, I would ever be
> A loving, trusting child to Thee;
> As comes to me, or cloud, or sun;
> Father, Thy will, not mine, be done

Prayer

Our Father, whose wisdom cannot err and whose goodness cannot fail, and who dost ever lead Thy people by a way that they know not to a place of largeness and deliverance, grant we beseech Thee to us Thy children a mind of humbleness and a spirit of obedience; that we may fret not under discipline, neither fear amid darkness, but day by day finding Thyself in us, and ourselves in Thee may come at last to Thine eternal peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

IV

CHRIST'S MIRACLES

"Through a glass darkly."—1 Cor. xiii. 12 (A.V.).

Do you believe in Christ's performing of miracles?

My answer to this question is in the affirmative, but some further explanation will be necessary lest you should go away with a wrong impression of what I do believe. And I have no desire whatsoever to seem to say one thing and in reality mean another: I have set myself to these addresses, and I intend to carry them through with perfect frankness, and perfect fairness; otherwise they would serve no purpose, and I should not deserve, that which I have asked for, your consideration and sympathy.

I know two people at the present moment whose Christian temper and feeling are alike unquestionable, and yet the miracles of Jesus constitute for the one the great and unshakable sign of the divinity of our Lord, while to the other, these same miracles constitute the greatest difficulty to be overcome in the acceptance of Christianity. It is a strange fact; and suggests to me that there is need, somewhere, of readjustment.

We have to decide two things about miracles; are they possible? and are they credible? If they are held to be impossible, then, of course, they will be incredible; so that the first question is as to their

possibility; and I ask your thoughtful consideration to this—Are miracles possible?

To answer this question rightly we must have a clear notion of what we mean by the word "miracle." It is a common conception that a miracle is a violation of a law, or the laws, of nature; and the violation of a law of nature by something occurring within the order of nature seems to be so flagrant a denial and stultification of the whole creation, that miracles are held to be impossible. If a law of nature has any authority whatsoever, a violation of it would introduce chaos: if the power of these laws of nature is not eternal, unshakable as God Himself, then the stability of the universe is undermined. If a law of nature can be broken, defied, set aside, for any purpose whatsoever, then our whole conception of the universe as a unity, an order, a system, must go.

The only reply to such a position as this is, that there are no such laws of nature.

Let it be said once and for all that there are no laws of nature in the sense of external powers which are able to constrain the processes of nature to certain ends. There are no laws of nature having authority over nature that it should obey them.

Where laws of nature are regarded as some practically all-powerful agencies which are keeping the world going, and holding it in its place, the conception is wrong altogether. There is no such thing. The popular view that the orderly regular process of the world would be at once impossible if these laws were removed, and that it is only by their constant, steady action that there is any orderly progress in nature at all; this view has no foundation in fact. In the popular mind these laws of nature are endued with powers; they are personalised almost; a law

of nature does this, or a law of nature causes that, and so forth; as if the world were a chariot drawn by horses, and the reins were in the hands of these laws of nature, the drivers of the steeds. What makes the sun rise, and the dew fall? It is a law of nature. What makes the flowers grow, and the seasons to circle? It is the laws of nature. It was a law of nature that caused Newton's apple to fall from the tree; and when disease seizes hold of a man he dies in obedience to laws of nature. The whole of this conception is wrong, and needs re-adjustment.

Laws of nature are not external authorities powerfully imposing themselves upon the world and demanding obedience; strings upon which the world hangs, or by which the mechanism is kept working. They are general expressions of the way in which things are seen to act, and not forces which constrain things to act in a certain way. They are expressions of an order that is observed in nature, not the powers which make that order possible.

A law of nature is not an energy, it is a formula.

Let us take an example: the law of gravitation. What is that? A young schoolboy might reply, it is that which makes an apple fall to the ground. The man in the street might reply, it is a law in obedience to which all things tend to fall to the earth. Both are wrong; for there is no law which can make anything do anything in nature; and obedience cannot be said to be due to that which has no authority.

But the scientist would say something like this. Through the years a multitude of observations and a multitude of experiments have been made as to the way in which bodies act upon each other; so far as we have been able to provide for it, nothing has

been left out of account; the whole range of nature, so far as it is amenable to our experiments and observations, has come under review; from the falling of an apple to the orbit of a star; and as the result of these observations of the facts and the course of nature, we have found that bodies do always and under all circumstances attract each other according to their masses, and inversely as the squares of the distances between them. And we group up all the results of these observations and experiments and express it in one formula, which we call the law of weight or gravitation.

Exactly what that property of matter is by which bodies do attract each other in this way does not concern us here. All that I am anxious for you to see is that it is not the law of gravitation which makes things attract each other; but that that law is simply a convenient expression of the way in which bodies *do* attract each other and, as a matter of fact, did always attract each other before ever the law of gravitation was formulated.

So that a law of nature is not a cosmic force, but a convenient formula.

If, therefore, I speak of a miracle as being not a violation of a law of nature, but rather as being an exception to a convenient formula, the thing does not appear nearly so impossible.

Now, the occurrence of exceptions to an observed order in nature has been characteristic of the whole length of the line of progress in knowledge. In point of fact these exceptions have not infrequently been the starting points of higher knowledge. The discovery of the exception to the observed order has often been the opening of the door to the knowledge of a higher order of facts.

When an exception to an observed order has been

noted, it has not infrequently been the stepping stone to a higher conception which has embraced both new and old in a wider truth.

Observations that a certain order was maintained in certain departments of nature have been made from the earliest times. The savage, for example, observed the brightness of the shining moon, watched it making its course through the sky, waxing and waning; one night he saw his moon eclipsed; that was an exception to the observed order, and he accounted for it by postulating the intrusion of a cruel, angry, devouring god. It was a miracle for him, because it was a violent exception to his rule; it is no miracle for us, because we have a knowledge of the solar system which makes both the eclipses and the shining of the moon facts in one cosmic order. Nowadays we are so impressed with the lack of finality in our knowledge that the occurrence of new things does not disturb us; but we need not go back so very far in time to understand that it would have been considered an impossible and incredible thing that a man should be able to make himself heard from London to Liverpool; or that a man should be able to see through a piece of wood; or that messages could be sent through the air, without any use of wires over a distance of 1000 miles.

What is miracle to one age is not miracle to another; for a miracle is an exception to an observed order, and our powers of observation and the range of our observation are constantly growing. We are continually rising to higher truth from the point of view of which exceptions are seen no longer as exceptions but as facts in a wider and harmonious order.

Indeed these exceptions to what may be called the usual order of things have played a vitally

important part in the history of creation. I think we may admit that under ordinary circumstances a seed falling from the mother plant into the ground and growing up would produce a plant of the same order as that from which the life was taken. But from time to time such seeds have produced a plant which in some important way has differed from the parent; has been provided with some new appendage, or some new form, or some new organ; and because it has been different from the usual order it has been called a freak, or a sport, or so forth. And yet by virtue of the fact that the new something, whose appearance is inexplicable, has been of use in the struggle for life, that which was originally a freak or a sport has become the parent of a new and in some cases a higher species.

At the beginning of every new species in creation there is an unaccountable something; a miracle, if you like; or a sport, if you like; which some may say to be due to chance; others may say is due to the inscrutable working of that Spiritual Power whose outward robe and adornment nature is.

So that as soon as you understand that a miracle is not a violation of a law, but an exception to an observed order, the possibility of miracles will not cause any difficulty to your mind; rather would the absence of such wonders be the more remarkable.

Now let us see how far we have got.

As we look out on created nature we observe certain uniformities; certain sequences of similar events, which so far as our observation goes, do steadily and constantly take place. Exactly what these uniformities are, and over what area they shall be found, depends upon our powers and range of observation. But obviously, both our powers and the range of observation are limited, and, therefore,

it is always possible that some new fact may swing within our scope of vision which shall be an exception to the uniformity we have so far observed. When these uniformities are deemed to be sufficiently established, or are found to be based on such principles as warrant it, they are embraced under what is called a law; and this is why a miracle which is really simply an exception to an observed order, comes to be regarded as the violation of a law. The difficulty lies mainly in the terms used; the violation of a law seems a terrible, if not altogether an impossible thing; but an exception to an observed order is among the most natural things in life.

A sceptic like Hume, and a scientific man of the type of Huxley, both admit that there is no valid reason that can be urged why miracles should be impossible.

But so far the possibility of miracles has been made to depend upon our ignorance; the suggestion of what I have said up to now is that the existence of a miracle is due to our imperfect observation, or to the limitedness of our range. A miracle is not really an exception to the uniformities or the unity of nature, but is due to the fact that we have been either mistaken or imperfect in the observations of nature which we have been able to make.

But I do not think that everything has been said; I do not think that it is simply our ignorance of all the facts that makes miracles possible. There is a deeper thought.

The basis of the world is spiritual. It is not a fortuitous congregation of atoms; it is not merely an unbroken series of physical causes and physical effects; it is not merely a huge mechanism. It exhibits an order which argues a mind, and it exhibits purpose, and the gradual realisation of purpose, which argues a

will—the whole therefore arguing a Person "who is through all and over all and in all." The whole trend of the ripest and sanest thought of modern times is in the direction of the assertion and establishment of this fact, that nature is the garment of spirit; that the bottom fact of the universe is not an indivisible atom but a spiritual power; that the deepest reality of the universe must be interpreted by the highest and not by the lowest that is in it; so that as Christians we are in a line with the best and most warrantable thought of the age when we maintain that the universe exists to embody a spiritual fact; that what we call laws and uniformities are the outward expressions of a spiritual process; that nature is an organism, and exists for the manifestation of a life, and that life is the incarnate life of the eternal Son of God. Nature exists for God; it is the manifestation of the incarnate life of God; this, in terms of religion, is what we mean, in terms of philosophy, by the unity of nature. Nature is the seamless dress of God.

Now I do not mean by this that God may be regarded as just doing anything He pleases, when He pleases, and how He pleases, with the world. When I say that nature exists for God, I do not mean that it is His puppet, and the plaything of His caprice.

I have never been able to appreciate the arguments of people who say, "Of course, everything is possible with God; He could stop the sun; He could drown the world; He could fling the world to destruction; He could do anything if He wanted to." God is not the deification of whim. God is not an omnipotent mountebank. God is revealing Himself in nature; cannot reveal aught but Himself, for there is naught else to reveal; there can therefore be nothing revealed in nature which is essentially incompatible

with serene majesty, steady will, perfect beauty and truth.

But when I say that nature exists for God, I *do* mean that we are not warranted in deducting from our necessarily limited and imperfect knowledge of nature a so-called law, and then proceeding to bind God in all His working by that law; denying that there can be anything which may not be duly brought under our formula, or calculated according to our rule. The ways of God cannot be measured by our scales, and our mathematical implements cannot draw a circumference round the Omnipotent; a natural order cannot ever embody the fulness of a spiritual life, and a formula deduced from a limited observation of that order can never be held to embrace the whole nature of that life. You cannot bind the whole by a law of the part. Rather is the part obedient to the law of the whole. All nature as we know it, or rather as we are coming to know it, is the self-revelation of God; and to that spiritual purpose of self-revelation all natural processes are subject. We cannot profess to fathom or to measure nature as God knows it, by empirical rule suggested by nature as we know it. Nature as God knows it is perfect; as we know it is imperfect; we must be content to believe that new facts and new and inexplicable events which agree not with our imperfect conception, are but the means whereby the Self-revealing Father is raising us to the higher standpoint, until that day shall come when we shall see nature and ourselves as He sees, "no longer through a glass darkly, but face to face."

I admit that there are limits; but those limits are perfectly clear. I admit that creation is the incarnation of the life of God; because that life is one, therefore nature must be a unity; can be nothing but

a unity. Nothing therefore can happen which denies or destroys that unity. I could not therefore believe in the happening of anything which either denied or destroyed the unity of nature; for that unity is essential to my conception of God in creation. But within and consistently with that unity, I am prepared to admit that many things may happen which to me may be inexplicable, may even appear to conflict with the laws of nature as I understand them, and which yet from a higher point of view might be unified with my present knowledge, and which, could I but see nature as God sees, might prove to be the true and only fulfilment of that divine, spiritual purpose for which nature exists.

For these reasons I hold that miracles in the sense that I have defined them are possible. Are they credible?

We may confine ourselves now to the miracles of Jesus.

This is a question of evidence; and here three arguments are usual, and, as I think, sufficient. In the first place we maintain that the narrative of the gospels is substantially accurate. As everyone knows, these narratives have been subject to the most pitiless searching, and the most persistent scrutiny, at the hands of men who have had the most modern weapons of criticism to wield, and conspicuous ability to wield them. I think that it is altogether right that this should be so. These narratives lie at the foundation of our faith, and we must be certified of their essential truth in the presence of the highest and most searching light we know; if they are false, the sooner they are exposed the better; if they are true, no amount of criticism can shake them, and they will come forth from the testing more radiant and more rooted.

I am not willing to underrate the power and the authority of these critics. I am not among those who treat their findings with a supercilious indifference; neither do I think that their so-called attacks can be brushed off like one would brush a meddlesome fly from one's face. I believe them to be men of sterling character and high purpose; men inspired by a high sense of loyalty to truth as they see it; they are unquestionably men of pre-eminent attainments, of great industry, and in some cases possessed of a finer sense of historical proportion and accuracy than some of those whose positions they contest. There never was a historical narrative which has been submitted to such thorough testing and examination, as the narrative of the life of Jesus as it is found in the gospels.

And what is the result? Some few modifications certainly; some side-lights which have altered our interpretation of passages here and there; some corrections of text; some change in our ideas of the historical setting; but in the main, and in all essentials, the narrative stands and looks the critics in the face unabashed. That divine act of protestantism has been vindicated, when it broke the chains that bound the bible to the wall, and sent it forth into the free open air of human life to stand on its own merits four square to all the winds that blow.

Let us grant the pruning-knife its place, but if the tree is sturdier and the fruit it yields more abundant, we are altogether gainers. That is the first argument; we can depend on the main, and in all essentials, upon the gospel narrative.

The second arises out of this. If the stories of all the wondrous works of Jesus are not statements of facts, they must be fancies or forgeries. Now,

so far as we are able to judge from comparison, the accounts of the signs and wonders which Jesus did are completely different in their style and method from the narratives of the miracles of superstition and legend. The life of Christ has been surrounded by much legend and superstition; and early literature of the Christian era contains the narratives of many wonderful things that He is said to have done: and with these we are able to compare those given in the gospels. For example, stories are told of the youth of Christ, and He is represented as displaying His miraculous power to His school friends by making clay birds, placing them on a wall, and then, clapping His hands, causing them to fly away. We are told that once being angry for some reason with another boy, He stamped His foot and the earth opened and swallowed the boy up. And suchlike are the miracles of legend and superstition. Some of the most important events in the life of Jesus are related in these spurious narratives with a wealth and fulsomeness of language, an elaboration of clumsy and impossible detail, that the falsity of the story lies patent on the surface. If the stories in the gospels were the fruits of forgery and superstition and legend, they would bear resemblances to these; as a matter of fact these are utterly and altogether dissimilar.

"And He touched her hand and the fever left her"; "and Jesus said, I will, be thou clean"; this is not the language of forgery; these are not the expressions of superstition; these quiet, dignified, sober, restrained narratives carry conviction with them; they read like truth. I have been reading last week again the wonderful stories of the life of the Buddha: and closing the book, I turned to the New Testament and read the eighth chapter of St

Matthew; the contrast was impressive; one seemed to be coming forth from a gaudy, extravagant, mysterious Oriental temple, into the clear quiet light of God's own sky.

If you want to convince yourself of the essential truth of the Gospel stories of the wonderful works of Jesus, you could not do much better than read, and compare with them, the legendary and superstitious narratives which have grown up around the person of some hero or demigod. Take one of the letters which you have received from your daughter who is away from home, and read it side by side, say, with one of Glory Quayle's letters in Hall Caine's book "The Christian," and you will see the difference between fact and fancy. Or let a man here untie the ribbon and read one of the letters that reached him years ago, side by side with those in the volume "An Englishwoman's Love-letters," and he will see the difference between fact and fancy.

The hall-mark on the stories of the Gospel is not that of an imaginative genius weaving fancies, but of a simple historian recording facts; they bear the marks not of a forger, but of a friend of Christ.

The third argument concerns the nature and the work of Christ. And briefly the argument is this; Christ being who and what He is, that there should attach wonders and signs to His incarnated life is a matter for expectation, rather than for surprise. Christ being who He is and what He is, it is natural and not unnatural to expect that connected with His life and work there should occur things whose origin and meaning lie beyond our understanding.

I believe that there is no miracle of Jesus in which we are asked to believe which breaks or threatens to break that unity of nature which is founded upon the Oneness of God. I believe that there is no

miracle of Christ in which we are asked to believe which does not tend to help us in our efforts to understand through Him the power and the love of God the Father. When Christ performs miracles He seems to me to stand forth as the possessor of a power which is not contrary to nature, but which He draws from sources beyond our ken; and what He does is not a violation of a law of nature, rather the promise of the fulfilment of the perfect will of God towards us. Christ being what He is, it is natural and not unnatural that He should be the possessor of such power, capable of manifesting itself in such ways, for such purposes.

I will content myself with the mere statement of this argument, for I am anxious to say a word upon another and important point before I finish.

We have been told of late that we are on the eve of a time when the miracles of Jesus Christ shall receive rehabilitation. These are the hopeful words of Mr Campbell of the City Temple, and with them I heartily agree; I believe that the time is not far off when our belief in the miracles of Jesus will be vindicated.

But I must make quite clear my position. For I have no desire to establish in their belief those whose conception of Christ's miracles is, in my judgment, false. I do not mean that whatever your belief concerning Christ's miracles may be, that that belief of yours will receive rehabilitation in the next years; it is a certain conception of Christ's miracles, the one which I hold to be true, which I believe will be vindicated.

This promise and hope attaches to the progress which is being made in a comparatively new science. I believe that we may reasonably expect within the next years a considerable addition to our knowledge

of the facts and faculties attaching to human personality. It is already perfectly clear that there are secret and subtle areas of human personality which as yet are closed books to us; that there are latent powers within us, lying near the core of our being, of which we are just becoming aware, and whose scope and issues we do not yet understand.

When, therefore, I say that I believe that the miracles of Jesus Christ will receive rehabilitation, I mean that when we shall once understand the full scope of the faculties and powers and possibilities which attach to the real nature of human personality, we shall discover facts and principles which will enable to bring the miracles of Jesus within the range of the laws of human personality. To say this, suggests that the miracles of Christ were performed by virtue of a power which was not alien from, but altogether within the range of, human personality, as He knew it, and as it was realised in Him, who knew it altogether.

It is at this point where some of us may part company. There are some of us who believe that Christ was able to perform miracles by reason of the possession of a power which was quite different in quality from any power that could possibly attach to human personality. A superhuman power, we might call it; or a divine power, as distinct from a human power. This is a position which I do not think the future will vindicate, for I do not think that it is true.

For I cannot go back upon what I have already said, my beliefs must be consistent with each other. I have already tried to make clear to you what I conceive Christ to be. Christ is the human side of God manifest in the flesh; Christ is the ideal humanity which was and is with God from the beginning, and

to which we are to attain through Him; Christ was this ideal humanity living an incarnate, self-limited life under conditions of time and space. The highest that humanity can be, and the highest that humanity can do, was found in Christ, *was* Christ: Christ summed up in Himself and realised in His life on earth the highest and noblest powers possible to humanity. Christ is humanity as it is for God who sees it perfect and entire, wanting nothing. Christ is the ideal humanity which is in the bosom of the Father, and came forth from the Father to declare Him: Christ therefore is highest human, but He is not superhuman. I see in Him the highest that I may become, it would be useless for me to see in Him, something which, as human, I could never become. This is not to say that Christ is not divine, it is to say, and this I take it is the whole meaning of Christ, that the divine and the human are at one; that in the highest, humanity and divinity are one.

That is my conception of Christ, and I can hold no view of miracles which is inconsistent with that conception. I am therefore constrained to believe that the powers which Christ wielded were not external to, or impossible to, perfected human nature; were not of a different quality from any powers which could attach to human personality; for Christ is just that highest possibility of humanity:—

> "Most human and yet most divine,
> The flower of man and God."

So I believe that as we come to know more and more of the faculties and possibilities that lie within us, and reach higher towards what we may be, we shall enter into that sphere of knowledge and of life, wherein the wonders of Christ indeed remain; but not as exceptions to the laws of human nature, and

to be accepted by transcendent faith alone; rather as the facts of a higher order, and the manifestation of a higher law, to be comprehended by our reason illumined with a higher light of truth.

I believe, therefore, in the miracles of Christ, but not as the intrusions and interferences of non-human power into the affairs of men; but as glimpses of the powers of a perfected humanity created in Christ Jesus to reveal to us what is that good and perfect will of God concerning us.

Prayer

O ever blessed God, our Father through Jesus Christ, who, high and highly lifted up above all things, hast come nigh unto us through Thy Son, fill us, we humbly beseech Thee, with all the fulness of Christ, that we may do His works, and greater works than these, according to His promise, to the end that Thy ways may be known unto men, Thy saving health unto all nations, and to Thee, Father, with the Son and the Holy Ghost be all honour and glory, throughout the ages. Amen.

V

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

"Thou foolish one, that which thou thyself sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be, but a bare grain: . . . but God giveth it a body as it pleaseth Him, and to each seed a body of its own."—1 Cor. xv. 36, 37, 38.

Do you believe in the Resurrection of the body?

I think that we must be careful as to how we approach this subject. For example, it must not be a matter of sentiment or mere desire with us. It cannot at all be a question of whether you would like to have your present body in the next life; or whether you would rather have another body, or no body at all.

My father is dead, and the memory of his face is fadeless; his white hair, and the tenderest eyes that ever looked upon an unworthy son; he was a minister of Jesus Christ, who stood, as so many others are standing to-day in the country towns and villages of this land, for God and truth and freedom, in a hard and trying place; as upright and dignified in his mind, as he was in body; a man of God, and one of God's men. One may be forgiven for thinking that the happiness of heaven would be completer for the sight of him again, with eyes made keener by experience to see and understand all that he must have toiled and suffered; one may

be forgiven for thinking that no light of heaven would be less pure for the presence of that dear body, ennobled in many battles, which were faced breast-forward, and refined in many fires, borne unflinchingly. But this sweetening and purifying sentiment could, of itself, never justify me in believing in the resurrection of the body.

And there is to-day, in an almost secret place, another minister of the Word; a man in the prime of life; whose body is already twisted and knotted and tied into almost impotence by the cruel, pitiless hands of rheumatism. He had a quick and original mind which was ever thinking new thoughts of God; but the constant pain, and the sleepless nights have dulled it and robbed it of its visions; no other feet would have been swifter than his to succour those in trouble; no other hand tenderer to smooth the wrinkles out of a harassed life; he was building up a strong Church when he was smitten down; leading his people forward with his cheery, courageous words; and now he is living out each day as it comes, with quiet courage, and serene patience, but always with the haunting thoughts of what he could have said and done and carried forward, if only he had been free; what a good soldier of Jesus he would have been in the ranks of the fighters; how he would gladly have spent and been spent for the lives of others.

May he not be forgiven the fervent desire that in the place of higher service to which one day he will be called, he may be freed from this twisted, racked, aching body; that the day may not be far distant when this earthly house of his tabernacle shall be dissolved, and leave him at liberty?

But neither must a denial of the resurrection of the body be made on such a ground as this.

And there are those who would have us approach this question from the purely scientific standpoint; and the decay and the permanent dissolution of the body must be brought within the finished cycle of physical causes and effects, and obey the laws of the indestructibility of matter, and the conservation of force. That even as our bodies came from the dust, to dust they must return.

We may well give a large and prominent place to the findings of science; but until science knows more of the nature of life, and of the nature of human personality than confessedly it does at present, it may be suggestive, but it can never be positive or dogmatic upon this matter which lurks at the very heart of the meaning of life, and is wrapped up in the depths of the relation between the personality and the body it has put on.

And some would have us approach the subject historically. As Christians, we have running side by side the two ideas—the resurrection of the body, and the immortality of the soul—but neither of these ideas originated with Christianity. They exist from the very dawn of the religious consciousness of humanity. And what is more, the two ideas did not originate together; they spring up at two different stages of the development of the human mind, and are connected with two different conceptions of what man is and is to be. Historically, they have been accompanied each by a different practice; it is from the people who were wont to bury their dead that the idea of the resurrection of the body has come; and from those who burned their dead that has come the idea of the immortality of the soul.

At the present day the two ideas are interwoven, and probably there are very few people who feel

any difficulty or incongruity in believing at one and the same time in the resurrection of the body and in the immortality of the soul. The suggestion, however, of the origin and the history of the development of the two ideas is that there is something incompatible in them, the one with the other.

The popular idea of resurrection is that the same body which is buried shall rise again; resurrection means, of course, rising again, and would have no meaning if it were not the same body that was to rise. And with this body, endowed with a perennial youth, I suppose, we shall spend eternity. The resurrection of the body therefore implies, in the popular belief, the immortality of the body. Which, so far as this same body of ours is concerned, is a contradiction in terms; for this body is what it is, in all its feelings, emotions, affections, pleasures and pains—is what it is, because mortal.

The resurrection of this same mortal body implies a further thing; it implies that the nature of the soul is such that it requires the mortal body for the completeness of its life. That the soul cannot live its life and realise the ends of its being apart from the body; that the soul is of such a nature as to need the body for its self-realisation for ever; in other words, that throughout eternity the body is as necessary to the life of the soul, as in this present state of existence the soul is necessary to the life of the body.

Now, what does this mean? It means that the body is more than the outward and separable garment of the soul; it means that it is more than a mere earthly house of temporary habitation; more than a tabernacle, a tent, a place of sojourning; it means that the body is necessary to the soul, not only in this state of existence, but for always; it

means that a certain area at any rate of the essential life of the soul depends for its expression and realisation upon things which are mortal; is indissolubly and inseparably bound up with things that are mortal; and this, at bottom, means that the soul is as mortal as the body.

If my soul cannot live out its life without this body, then my soul cannot altogether be free from that mortality which is of the very essence and meaning of this body.

These are merely suggestions, but they appear to me to go beyond a mere hint that the resurrection of the body, as commonly held, is incompatible with a belief in the immortality of the soul; and for myself I see many more reasons for believing in the immortality of the soul, than I do for believing in the resurrection of the body.

But the matter may be approached from another point; a point from which perhaps the majority of you would prefer that it should be approached. I mean from the words and teaching of the New Testament.

Here we have to consider the gospels and the epistles, and in dealing with the gospels must distinguish between the Synoptics—Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and John.

The classic reference on this matter is to the discussion which Jesus held with certain of the Sadducees who came asking Him concerning the resurrection of the dead. Bringing His teaching into line with the Old Testament Jesus asks His questioners, "Have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are therefore conceived as living a life of communion with God, of such a

kind as to bring them on to that perfection of life for which they were destined. In another important passage, this time in St John's gospel and therefore transfused with the ideas peculiar to that author, Jesus speaks of Himself as "the Resurrection and the Life"; and at another time addressing Himself to those Jews who charged Him with Sabbath-breaking, he cried, "the hour cometh in which all that are in the tombs shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done ill unto the resurrection of judgment." Christ therefore teaches of a resurrection life which shall be for the dead; a life which springs from God, a life which is one with Himself, and a life which shall not be out of relation with the life that we live in the body. He teaches the resurrection of the dead, but none of the words of Jesus, rightly understood, compel our belief in the resurrection of the body. Christ's own words, "He that believeth on Me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die"; speak of a risen life that is through faith, therefore a spiritual life rather than a physical; and the fundamental conception in Christ's teaching as I read it, is that resurrection is a spiritual renovation.

The incidents recorded in the gospels in which the dead were raised—the widow of Nain's son, Jairus' daughter, Lazarus—and our Lord's own resurrection, teach us of the fundamental independence of the life of the soul on the body; and afford no argument for the resurrection of the body except to those who believe that the resurrection life will be upon the same plane and under the same conditions as the life that now is.

But perhaps I am right in thinking that the views

of the majority of Christians upon the resurrection of the body are taken largely from the writings of St Paul. But without any of that connected study of the epistles in their chronological order, on the basis of which alone can we arrive at a satisfactory conclusion.

It is a fatal weakness to extract a verse or a phrase from both its immediate context, and the general contents of the apostle's mind at the time it was used, and simply because it happens to fit in with our unreflective thoughts, or our own preconceptions, accept it as a final and complete revelation of truth.

As a matter of fact, Paul's ideas of the resurrection are coloured by his idea of the second coming of Christ; which he regarded as a physical event, and an event which would take place either in his own lifetime, as he hoped, or very shortly afterwards, at the end of his age. Whatever we may think about his conception of the second advent of Christ, it is clear that his anticipation of it as an event shortly to be consummated was without foundation. We must be careful, therefore, how we use a conception of the resurrection which was born and fostered under this wrong idea.

It is further important to notice that Paul's views on this question and other questions closely allied, changed and developed as he grew older. In the epistle to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. iv. 15), "we that are alive and left unto the coming of the Lord shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep"; but in the later epistles, *e.g.*, the second to the Corinthians, he speaks of that day in vague terms as "the day of the Lord Jesus Christ"; and in his latest epistles, *e.g.*, Philippians, Colossians and Ephesians, he has given up all notions of time and

place and speaks of the world-wide significance of Christ, and fixes his mind upon the redemption through Christ, of all spiritual beings.

Again in his earlier epistles Paul thought that the resurrection would take place at one catastrophic moment, when all should appear together before the bar of God; later he changed this view and in (2 Cor. ch. v.) we find that he expects that the resurrection will take place for each one immediately upon the termination of this present existence.

It is important to remember these things; one of the chief dangers to our right views of things is this slipshod use of scripture verses without any regard for the setting, and their relation to the general outlook of the author.

But even in his earlier epistles Paul does not teach the resurrection of this same body that dies. He distinctly says in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, "there is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body"; and again, "Thou witless one, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be, but a bare grain"; or again, "Now, this I say brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God."

I have not made any mention of the Old Testament, although that remarkable word of Job, popularised for all of us in immortal music, "Though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God," has had no little share in formulating our views on this matter; I have not referred to the Old Testament because the ideas in it on this question are very scanty and very vague and very crude; and, so far as we are able to judge, from Psalms and prophecies, limited altogether to the national idea of Israel as the chosen people of Jehovah.

But the closer and more intelligent the study of the New Testament we make, the clearer becomes its teaching; that there is a life after the death of the body; a life which is in Christ, which is continuous with this present life, and springs from the life of God; but there is nothing to justify an expectation that the body in which that life shall be lived shall be this body, or indeed a body at all like unto this.

If, therefore, I were to confine my arguments to such as may fairly be based upon Scripture I should not be able to convince myself of the resurrection of the body; the rising again to life of this mortal frame; the building up again after dissolution of this earthly house of our tabernacle. As Dr Horton has also said, "I do not believe that the actual particles laid in the grave will be at the resurrection reclothed and replaced."

I do not wish to banish the word "resurrection," although the idea contained in it of the rising again of something which has been buried is, when applied to this body of ours, a wrong idea; but in my own thoughts I rather dwell upon the idea of a risen life, a life which has broken free from the cerements of death and blossomed into new and fairer forms. And the idea of resurrection I confine to a spiritual renovation of which I have no doubt whatsoever, and which I believe to be due to the mercy of God, and mediated to me through faith in Jesus Christ.

There is another thought which at times appeals strongly to me. I must bring all my beliefs into a harmony with each other so far as is possible; so that my view of the resurrection will be determined for me primarily by my conception of God. And my conception of God is such that the resurrection

of my body would be useless to me in my endeavour to enter into closer communion with Him.

What is your conception of God? It is a development of the fact which Jesus Himself told to us when He said, "God is Spirit."

When we speak of God we are obliged, owing to the limitations of our minds, to speak of Him and to think of Him and to imagine Him under a form; in a picture, as it were. We think of Him under the idea "Father"; we speak of Him as loving, and pitying; of hearing us when we pray; of seeing us when we do wrong, and so forth. In a word, we think of God as being in the form of a man. But on reflection I think that we shall all see that this is the form under which we are obliged to think of God, and is not the reality of God. The form attaches to our own mind, and not to the reality of God. God is not a very powerful, and a very good, and a very wise, manlike Being, sitting upon a throne, or walking in a garden. When it is said that man was made in the image of God, it can only be spiritual attributes, and not physical attributes, that can be referred to. It is truer to say that God is love, than that God loves; and that God is life, than that God lives.

And all my thinking of God, and all my praying to God, and all the outgoing of my love to God, obliged as I am to think of it, and realise it, under terms and figures of human thought and feeling, all this is to the end that my spirit may come closelier to the Great Over Spirit, and may grow purer and stronger through the communication of the life that is alone in Him. I may make use of that which is attached to, and communicated to me through my purely physical nature to help me in my approach towards God, and the realisation of the oneness of

my life with Him, but my real approach to God is a spiritual approach; and it is not an unfamiliar experience that one of the chief hindrances to that spiritual approach towards God, up to God, is this body, which is gross and carnal and of time.

God is Spirit. Now, if this be so, it is not an unimportant question to be asked; what would be the advantage to me in my progress Godward of the permanent attachment of this body? In the higher life, the life that is to come, the life which I shall live nearer to God; what use would this body be to me?

What use these eyes, if He is not to be seen by organs of sight? What use these hands, if He is not tangible? What use this voice, if He hears not as we hear? If God is Spirit, then my only knowledge and apprehension and enjoyment of Him must be spiritual; and the flesh, this body, would be a permanent barrier between Him and me. If my approach to God is to be real and effectual, I must conceive of a time when my spirit, His own child, shall be free from all the fetters and the trammels of the body to seek Him, to reach to Him, to grow up into Him, to worship Him. I must be absent from the body, that I may be present with my Lord.

> "Here in the body pent,
> Absent from Him I roam."

The presence of the body is almost a sign of, and a measure of, our distance from our true home.

I believe that the end and purpose of my life is communion with God; I cannot conceive that all our strivings and our strainings here are out of all relation to our ultimate destiny; I cannot believe that I am mistaken when I try to find the real meaning of my life in the highest that is possible to me;

and I know that I am at my best when, in spite of failures and backslippings and bafflements, I am aspiring Godward; through that best life I interpret my whole life. I therefore must believe that the next life, or if there be a series, the next lives that I am to live, must be phases in that progressive realisation in myself of the life of God; but as the carnal is ultimately incongruous with the spiritual, and the temporal with the eternal, the connection of my body with myself must cease before I reach that promised land.

But, once more, we must not be content with the mere destruction of an old belief; what are you to hold by instead?

Let us watch these words of Paul: "Thou witless one, that which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be, but a bare grain; but God giveth it a body as it pleaseth Him."

What does that signify?

I do not believe in the resurrection of the body, but that is not to say that our spirits at the end of this life become, and for ever remain, disembodied, or as Paul calls them, naked spirits.

In the next life I do not believe that our spirits will be clothed with this body; but I do believe that they will be clothed with *A* body. That which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be; God giveth it a body as it pleaseth Him.

We talk about the Absolute; but it is not easy for us to think it, and indeed until we come into the possession of higher powers, such an entity must, as such, remain unknowable. We may in a very abstract way conceive of an absolute, unconditioned spirit; an essence without form; but it must remain the barest and barrenest of ideas.

All spirit, short of that absolute and unconditioned

spirit, embodies itself in some form. All life takes to itself a body of some kind. All reality clothes itself in appearance.

The purpose for which life clothes itself in a definite form is that it may thereby enter into communication with the environment from which it draws its supplies. And the form is determined by the nature of the life on the one hand, and the nature of the environment on the other. The life which is within creation is one, but it takes different forms according to the principle of action and reaction; the life and the particular environment act and react on each other, and the resulting form in which the life appears is determined according to the perfectness with which it places the life and the environment in touch with each other.

Our human spirits live; and they live on what I may call for want of a better term, this world-plane. What then is your body? Your body is the form in which your spirit has clothed itself that it may live its life on this plane. Why should your spirit have a body? Because its life on this plane can only be realised in so far as it is in communication with, in correspondence with, the surroundings in which it is placed; and the body is the channel through which that relation between your spirit and its physical environment on this earth-plane is realised. And why this body rather than any other? because for the purpose it is the best, perhaps indeed the only one, that nature could produce; or put into scriptural language, "God giveth it a body as it pleaseth Him."

If a spirit is to live its life on this earth-plane it must take to itself, clothe itself with, put on, this body. If the spirit of Lazarus, or if the spirit of Jesus, is to be called back from a region which is

beyond, and live again upon the earth-plane, it must clothe itself in that form, in that body, which is peculiar to, or at any rate adapted to, these conditions.

The power of Jesus in calling Lazarus from the tomb does not appeal to me as being a power which Jesus had over the dead body; but a power which He had to recall the spirit of Lazarus. I have no idea of the state of existence wherein the spirit of Lazarus found itself at the death of his body, but I do see that if by any means that spirit may be called back, as it were, to this earth-plane to live again under these conditions, it must, of necessity, embody itself in the body of Lazarus.

For the full and perfect development of your soul a certain experience is necessary; and it is clear that a portion of that experience is to be gained on this earth-plane: it can only be gained according as your spirit takes to itself a form, the nature of which is to be determined by the environment under which it is to live upon earth; that is your body.

And it is clear that in the next state of your soul's existence whatsoever it may be, it must put on a form which shall under those next conditions answer the same purpose that your body answers here. It will not be this body, for the conditions will be different; it would only be the same body, if the conditions of the next life were the same as these conditions, in which case there would be no need of death or an end of this life. The conditions of the next life must be different to the conditions of this; and so the body which our spirits shall put on, will be different from this body. It will have such a body as will enable it to receive that further experience which would be the only purpose of another life. "That which thou sowest, thou sowest not that

body that shall be; but God giveth it a body as it pleaseth Him."

And, brethren, I do not shrink from carrying forward the suggestion of the next words, "and to every seed its own body."

On this plane of existence we each have our distinctive bodies; through my body you know me, and I know you through yours; and some of us love each other for what we are in the body; and the love of some is very strong and very true; so pure and holy as to be itself a glimpse of immortality amid this mortal life, a breath of the infinite, a token of God.

Death will always be for human lives a shadow; but at times a shadow deeper than death steals over our minds with the question, "shall we know each other again in that new life that is to be?"

> "Yet oft when sundown skirts the moor
> An inner trouble I behold
> A spectral doubt that makes me cold,
> That I shall be thy mate no more."

But the body which you shall put on in the life that is to come will be distinctive of you, as is this body; the form may not be the same as this, but there will be the same soul, and the form will express the same soul, and be the channel of the outgoing of that same life, only illumined and purified, which even here breathes in your fragrant smiles, and burns in your noble deeds.

You shall have your body, and your beloved his; "God giveth it a body as it pleaseth Him, and to every seed its own body."

Let that shadow at least be driven from our thoughts of death; and let us greet the passage of our spirits through the darkened doorway to the

higher light beyond, with the strong courage and glowing faith of Browning :—

"For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,
The black minute's at end,
And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that rave,
Shall dwindle, shall blend,
Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain,
Then a light, then thy breast,
O thou soul of my soul ! I shall clasp thee again,
And with God be the rest ! "

Prayer

O Everlasting God, grant unto us, who know not the day nor the hour when the call shall come, that we may live in a constant, watchful preparation ; that, being cleansed from our sins through the precious blood of Christ, and sanctified by Thy Holy Spirit, we may have an entrance ministered unto us abundantly into the Everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom with Thee, the Father, and the Holy Spirit be glory for ever. Amen.

VI

HELL, (1) AS A PLACE
(2) AS A STATE OF MIND

"God is Love."—1 JOHN iv. 8.

Do you believe in Hell as a world or place of punishment, or only as a state of mind?

THIS question introduces us to a subject in connection with which we must be on our guard against that fatal habit of reading into biblical terms and phrases, theological ideas and doctrines, which have sprung up round them through the centuries; and which as a matter of fact they will not carry.

Most of us received a large amount of oral and unsystematic instruction in biblical matters before we were able to think things out for ourselves; at a time of life too when imagination was quick, and the capacity for belief was great. The purpose of such instruction was the inculcation of morals and the growth of piety; and so long as that end seemed to be achieved, the means were not too closely scrutinised; and consequently many of us got our morals and our piety at the expense of historical accuracy and the light of reason; weak morals, therefore, and shallow piety.

Furthermore, we entered, in quite tender years into an inheritance of religious ideas and beliefs which attached to the religious community among

which we moved. From conversations overheard between our elders; from sermons submitted to; from hints caught at here and there; an oath heard in the street, maybe; or a phrase from a funeral service; in these indefinite, chance, half-conscious ways we took in from the religious atmosphere of our time and circumstance ideas and beliefs which, almost before we were aware of it, had become settled convictions and permanent parts of our mental and religious stock.

As life passed forward it became less and less possible for us to examine these things, to test them with their originals, to enquire for authorities; and so it happened that these traditional thoughts and doctrines and points of view, received passively as definite instruction, or breathed in from the religious atmosphere of the time, gradually became hardened into preconceptions and prejudices of the most obdurate order.

And these prejudices were still further established by this fact; every time we read the bible we put into its words and sentences this traditional interpretation; whenever we read the words "heaven" or "hell" or "devil" or "damnation," we at once took it for granted that the meaning of those words was exactly that which was already in our minds; and so reading our theories into the words, came to the conclusion that there was scriptural authority of the highest order for all that we had been taught, or had received.

To read a theory into a passage and then to find the theory there, is far too easy a process to be of any advantage in the progress of truth.

Take the average and ordinary young person in this congregation, brought up under the usual religious influences of home and Sunday school and

church. I mean the average between the thoughtful student on the one hand, and the indifferent reader on the other, to whom the bible is a string of verses and practically nothing more. There must be a considerable number of young people in this congregation who have neither time nor opportunity for a study of the bible, and yet who do not read it without thought and without reflection. Now, when you read this sentence, "Our Father, Who art in heaven,"—you have, at the mention of the word "heaven" a more or less definite picture in your mind of what heaven is; it is, let us say, a beautiful city where God dwells, and towards which you are making your pilgrim's progress.

Where did you get that idea from? You got it maybe at your mother's knee, years ago; from the books of bible pictures that were your delight on Sabbath evenings; you got it from the common stock of religious ideas in vogue among your friends and on which you fed your religious instinct in earlier days; and it was deepened and established in your mind by chance phrases that you caught in prayers, or in sermons and hymns, and so forth; and in course of time that idea has become steady and clear in your mind, and whenever you read the word "heaven" in the bible, you read that idea into it. And you only get that idea out of the bible, because you have first read it into it.

It is the same with the word hell; there is a popular idea of the meaning of the word "hell"; and we inherit that popular idea; it is a certain fixed, definitely localised place; a place to which all unrepentant sinners go at death; and in which amid fire and brimstone and all kinds of horrible tortures they are punished for their sin; and there is no outlet; it is a place of everlasting punishment.

That is the popular idea; and where did it come from? It came out of the imaginations of men centuries ago, and was perpetuated because it served the interests of the Church, and was supposed to be useful in the teaching and practice of morality. It became a popular tradition; and fastened on the popular mind through epic poems, and allegorical stories, and the hymns of the Church; such an idea of hell is the creation of the Church and of theology, subservient to the Church. And we inherit it in ways to which I have already referred.

Such an idea is not found in the bible, except by those persons who first put it there; who read the idea and the doctrine into the words of the bible, and then triumphantly extract it, and parade it, crowned with a spurious halo of divine authority.

Now, when the question is asked, "Do you believe in hell as a world or a place of punishment?" It is this popular conception that must be referred to; and as I certainly do not believe in any such place, I am anxious to give you as clearly as I can my reasons. Let us think the matter out together.

Now, in this as in other matters, our conception of God is the dominating conception of our religious thought; and your belief about hell, whatsoever that belief may be, must tally with your belief about God.

We sing sometimes, "The King of Love my Shepherd is"; and there are two ideas there, the idea of love, and the idea of sovereignty, which are for all Christians inalienable from the idea of God. We can conceive of God as angry, we can conceive of Him as punishing, but side by side in our consciousness with the idea of God we cannot

admit to a place any idea which questions for a moment the steady constant working of an ineffable love.

I do not pretend that there is no mystery around much of God's working; I do not pretend that it is always easy to understand that love is the whole fulfilment of the law; but if you take God to be the deification of whim; if you imagine God as acting under caprice; now lavishing His love upon unworthy people; and now in a burst of awful anger, laying the earth desolate; the victim of His own moods; an unsteady, unreliable, changeable, tyrant of the world; I am sure that you can never explain human life and human experience as we know it.

I do not underrate the problem of evil; I am not insensitive to its suggestions; there are times when I feel the deep darkness of the shadow it casts upon the mind. But the problem of evil under the hypothesis of the government of the world by a just and true and loving God, is as the perfect brightness of day compared with the impenetrable night that would be cast abroad by the problem of good, under the hypothesis of the government of the world by a God who was really an omnipotent devil. If the light that is in the world were darkness, how great would that darkness be?

So that if we cannot conceive of God as an all-powerful caprice; nor as an almighty devil; and if we cannot deny the existence of God altogether, because we cannot explain our life and our experience without Him; we are shut up to this, that God is Love; omniscient Love that cannot err; omnipotent Love that cannot fail; infinite Love that cannot be expressed.

Now that must be a regulative idea for you; God's dealings with His children must be through

and through consistent with that fundamental and inalienable Love.

One of those American evangelists whose doings have been amply chronicled in our religious press—Dr Torrey—declared in a recent Evangelical mission at Manchester that all "who persistently reject Christ shall be tormented day and night for ever and for ever; and that only the everlasting anguish of such sinners can satisfy our moral nature."[1] I mention this fact to show you that the traditional view in all its essentials is by no means so dead as some of you may have thought; for it means that during the years of such a missionary campaign as that, there must be thousands of young and unlearned people who have been admitted to the fellowship of our churches, and in whose conversion this monstrous falsity has played a vital part.

Is your moral nature such, is God's moral nature such, that it can only be satisfied when sinners shall be tormented every day and every night for ever and ever?

Dr Torrey speaks of a moral punishment that lasts for ever and ever; a phrase that contains its own condemnation; a punishment that should last for ever and ever would be beyond all things immoral.

For why? This is my reason.

It is the sinner who is punished; which means that punishment is directed towards a person; a moral personality; a personality whose very meaning involves a capacity for righteousness. When God punishes a sinner, He punishes one who was made in His image. Punishment is a moral means directed against a moral agent, and therefore for a moral end. I cannot think of God as punishing without a purpose; and if with a purpose it must be a moral

[1] Vide *Christian World*, Nov. 12, 1903.

purpose; and if the punishment is against a person, that moral purpose must of necessity be partly realised in him.

Hence all God's punishments for sin, exacted upon the sinner, must have this purpose at any rate, the restoration of the sinner to the moral conditions from which in his sin he fell; the liberation of the indwelling energies that make for righteousness, from the fetters which the sin has cast upon them. I do not say that this purpose is always realised; neither do I say that there are no difficulties remaining; but I do say this, that if the God who punishes the sinner is Love, then the purpose of punishment must be a purpose of love; it must be discipline, and not vengeance; it must be primarily restorative, and not primarily retributive.

But a punishment which lasts for ever and ever is not discipline, for all moral discipline looks towards liberty, and the door of hell will not open to let the sinner out; and a punishment which lasts for ever is not restorative, for on the hypothesis, there is no escape.

So that either Dr Torrey's hell must be a morbid fancy of an irrational and barbaric evangelicalism; or his God must not be a God of love. There are punishments of love; but the punishments of a hell of endless and unescapable torment are not the punishments of love.

But our God is also King. And the traditional idea of hell is as incompatible with the sovereignty, as it is with the Fatherhood of God.

God is King; He is the eternal and inviolable law of righteousness in which the whole creation was made; and which the whole creation vindicates and must vindicate. In the presence of this law of eternal righteousness, sin creates disorder; sin is

lawlessness; and if the eternal righteousness is to be vindicated, if God's sovereignty is to be perfect and entire, then sin which is an offence to this law, and a threat to this sovereignty, must be driven forth and destroyed altogether; so long as sin exists God must make war upon it; and the day of God's triumph will be the day when sin is no more.

But the traditional hell means nothing if it does not mean this, that God cannot win a final and complete triumph over sin. Dr Torrey's hell is the token of the failure of God; and the break up of His sovereignty. For wherever this hell may be, it must be somewhere within the limits of the created universe; and its presence signifies that all God's efforts to expel sin from His domain have so signally failed, that He has been obliged to come to terms with it, and provide for it a permanent place within His kingdom. And if you say that there is a purpose in such a hell, and that the presence in it of sinners doomed to perpetual punishment, tormented every day and every night for ever and ever, is valuable as a means of deterring others from sinning, lest they should come to a like place; this only makes matters worse; for what does it mean?

It means that all the means and methods for the deliverance of the sinner, which could suggest themselves to a Loving Omnipotence, are in the result so useless and impotent, that God has been compelled to make an ally of His arch-foe; and to give to sin not only a definite place, but also a definite function, within His kingdom. This is unthinkable.

But there may be those of you who will say, "But, after all, doesn't the New Testament teach us that there is such a place; a place of outer darkness; of fire and brimstone; of endless punishment"? I answer clearly and emphatically, No.

In the authorised version of the bible the word "hell" occurs eighteen times; and it is used to translate three different words. And the right way to go about this matter is not to read into the word hell in each of these passages the traditional doctrine and the traditional idea, but to find out exactly what each of these three words meant in the minds of those among whom they were used. The three words are, Tartarus, Hades, and Gehenna.

The word Tartarus is used but once in the New Testament; and by St Peter in his second Epistle. It is a heathen, as opposed to a Christian, term. It embodies the ideas of Greeks and Romans concerning the spirits of the departed. It is the name given to that region which lay beyond the gates of death; a world of shades; a place inhabited by "thin, wavering, unsubstantial ghosts." It was used in a wider and in a narrower sense. In the wider sense it included Elysium the place of the departed spirits of the good; and in the narrower sense was used solely for the dark and dismal abode of the departed spirits of the wicked, a place of torture and pain, where, like Tantalus the wicked suffered unquenchable thirst; or like Ixion, were tied to ever-revolving wheels of pain; or like Sisyphus, performed hopeless tasks; or like Tityus, were the perpetual and unconsumed prey of serpents and vultures.

In this narrower sense St Peter doubtless used the words; but mark the words: "God spared not the angels who sinned, but cast them down to Tartarus, to be reserved unto judgment"; it was therefore in Peter's mind at any rate, not a final state, but an intermediate state, a place of waiting until the day of judgment.

The word Hades is translated by our word "hell" five times in the New Testament. It is a Greek word, and its literal translation is the unseen world, and it meant the unseen world which was supposed to lie beneath this world, and to which the spirits of the departed passed at death. It was a wide realm, and included both Paradise and Gehenna; so that it cannot be the same as our traditional hell, about which there is nothing that savours of Paradise. What it meant to the Jews of Christ's age, may be judged from the fact, that Josephus says that the spirit of Samuel was evoked from Hades to warn Saul; and surely Samuel was not thought of as being in everlasting torment.

Dives and Lazarus were both in Hades, according to the parable, and whatever we may think of the torment of Dives, the beneficial effect it was having on him justifies us in suggesting that his state could not have been a final state, or one of perpetual and endless torment; for an endless punishment could never restore the sinner; and if such punishment could restore the sinner, and was yet to be inflicted upon him, restored or not, for ever, it would make God the very apotheosis of cruelty.

In one of his speeches, St Peter quotes a messianic prophecy of David: "Thou wilt not leave Thy holy one in Hades"; and applies it to Jesus; and says that David, foreseeing what would happen, spake of the resurrection of Christ that His soul was not left in Hades. Peter quotes it as a promise made by God; put the traditional idea of hell there, and see what a sweet and gracious promise it is, "God will not leave Christ in a place of endless torment." Is that an assurance that was wanted? Does it appeal to you that there is any special grace on the part of God to make such a promise as that? the

idea is revolting. Put the true idea, Hades, the world of the departed, and the meaning that Christ could not be holden of death, but would rise again bringing life and immortality to light, is very different, and very much more congruous. So that in these five passages there is no foundation for the popular notion.

The word Gehenna occurs twelve times in the New Testament, in passages which are familiar to you all. What does the word mean? It is derived from Gehinnom, or the valley of Hinnom; a steep ravine outside the walls of Jerusalem through which flowed the brook Kidron. In earlier days, it was the place of the summer palaces, a place of delightful retreats, the paradise of King Solomon, full of music and the laughter of women. In his later years, Solomon polluted this place by idolatrous worship to please his foreign ladies, and it became the scene of cruel and licentious rites; here the children were made to pass through the fire to Moloch, and so, in the minds of the faithful, this valley came to signify all that was wicked and abominable, and loathsome to God Jehovah. Josiah cut down the groves and burned them, ground the shrines and the altars to powder; laid the gardens waste, and strewed the place with the bones of the dead. In time it became the refuse place of the city; offal was thrown there; and the carcases of animals, also of great criminals who were not worthy of burial; there the worm preyed on the corruption, and the fires were kept burning always, lest pestilence should arise and infect the city.

For the Hebrew prophets, therefore, and also for the Jews down to the time of Jesus, this Gehinnom was the figure, or type, or illustration of the doom of the wicked. And it is possible, by studying a long period of Hebrew literature which included the age

which was contemporary with Christ, to discover something of the meaning which such an illustration conveyed to the mind of a Jew; and it is not unnatural to suppose that this meaning, and not something quite different from it, would be in the mind of Christ, and in the minds of His hearers when He used the word. Now all these writings have been studied, and there issues this fact that they lend no countenance whatever to the idea of Gehenna as a place of endless torment. The Jewish Fathers are definite enough on the matter; they say that the torment of Gehenna shall last twelve months, or in some cases, that it shall last for a single day, or that it shall last "as long as the righteous shall please." In one somewhat doubtful case it is said that it shall last for generations and generations; but nowhere that it shall last for ever. The importance of this fact lies here, that when Christ used the word, His hearers would interpret it according to the prevalent idea; and apart from any distinct direction by Christ that it was meant by Him to refer to something quite different, we are justified in interpreting the passages in which the word occurs according to the common Jewish notion.

I cannot here deal with all the passages in detail; when you get hold of the general principle you can study them for yourselves. When Jesus says "whosoever shall say to his brother, Thou fool, shall be in danger of a Gehenna of fire," He is evidently speaking in a figure. He is simply teaching His hearers in an oriental figure that sin shall be punished; and the sin that is in the heart shall be punished; and the deeper the sin, the greater the punishment. It is figurative again, when He says, "it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, than that thy whole body should be cast into Gehenna";

He means that it is better to suffer the utmost self-denial and self-restraint in relation to a sin, than that it should be given place in our lives, and, working there, fill the whole life with pain and misery and death.

In these passages there is no reference whatsoever to a future state. There is, however, a reference to the future in that passage which runs "be not afraid of those that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna," or, as St Luke puts it, "fear Him who, after He hath killed, hath power to cast into the Gehenna."

But here again, the point of the passage lies in the contrast between wrong done against men and the laws of men, which they were able to punish by killing the body; and wrong done against God and the laws of God, of which the punishment was infinitely more serious; for the result of such sin against God is alienation from Him; and alienation from God, in Christ's view, meant the disease and the decay and the death of the moral and spiritual life, which was far more serious than the death of the body.

So that we find, what indeed might have been expected, that the traditional conception of hell, as a place in which the sinner endures an endless and unescapable punishment for his sin, is as much without foundation in the teaching of the New Testament, as it is without foundation in any true and worthy conception of God.

What then? I think that the best thing to do is to take our courage in both hands and put our foot down and say that we do not believe in hell at all; get rid of the word altogether from the vocabulary of our religious language.

The word has become so hopelessly mixed up with ideas and doctrines with which we cannot possibly agree, and which are as alien from our moral sense and our sense of God as they are from our common sense, that to retain it, however so much we may cleanse it of all this false meaning, is unwise; and the best thing is to cast the word forth altogether. I see no value in retaining it; if it is impossible quite to rid it of wrong ideas and exploded theories, to which no intelligent and thoughtful Christian can for a moment give either place or credence, then let it go. Let it take its place among the historical relics of our faith; left lying by the wayside along which the Church of the Redeemer has passed to the higher light and the nobler view.

All sin is punished, and there must be a place of punishment; but there is no reason why we should call it hell, we might as well call it earth; for this is the place of the punishment of sin, as really and as truly as in any life that is to come.

There is no support either in scripture or in reason for the idea that a strict record will be kept of the sins of all of us until a last day when we shall be called before the judgment seat of God and sent away into a special place to do punishment for all our past misdeeds. The idea is wrong, root and branch.

Sin is punished here, and sin is punished hereafter; wherever within the wide universe of God there is sin, there will there also be punishment; remedial, disciplinary, restorative; scourging the sin and saving the sinner so as by fire. This is clear and true; it is taught in the bible; it is taught in experience; it is a law of human life. Sin and punishment are inseparable; and at that place where the sin is consummated, there the punishment begins; but I see no reason for calling this place hell.

And it is useless to speak of hell as being a state of mind; this is at the other extreme. Let us come right down to the bottom of the matter and say that, "all the punishments of God are self-acting; they are not inflicted; they follow." The punishment of sin is really the development within the life of what sin really is, inherently is.

What is sin? It is the voluntary choice in any situation of the lower of two possible alternatives. What does that mean? It means the voluntary removal of your will from out of touch with the best and the highest you know; in brief, sin is alienation from God. And the punishment of sin is the result, the inevitable and necessary result, in your life of that alienation from God. And what is that result? What follows when your life is cut off from the life of God? It is as when a babe is torn from its mother's breast; or when a flower is shut up from all light and from air; or when a plant is brought from its native clime; the life pines and withers, the tissue softens, the colours fade, the fruit fails, the plant becomes sickly, the parasite makes it an easy prey; decay sets in, and death is the issue. That, brethren, is the punishment of sin; it may be accompanied by state of mind; there may be remorse, and regret; there may be a contrast, bitter enough, between what is and what might have been; and if it helps you to call these states of mind "hell," do so; but see to it that you understand clearly, that it is not merely to escape from remorse that you want; your remorse is simply the shadow of a cloud playing upon the surface of the water; you want to get back into touch with God; you want to have the direction of your life changed; you want to get back from the far country to the Father's home.

I do not wish to harrow your minds with pictures

of the depths of human misery, in stories which might be matched from the experience of almost any minister; but I have in my mind at this moment, a vivid picture of a man burying his head in his hands and shaking with sobs; sitting in my study on the opposite side of the hearth. He was a victim to drink; and for the sake of this sin, he had ruined his handsome face, ruined his prospects, his home, broken the heart of his wife, and all but lost the love of his children. I see him suddenly rising from his seat and looking into my face with glistening eyes, as he cried: "I am powerless, I cannot help myself; put my sin on the one side, and on the other everything—honour, duty, happiness, home, wife, children, hopes in this life and in the life to come, religion, my soul, God—everything, Heaven knows which I would choose, if I could, but I cannot; I must sin"; and then flinging his hands aloft in an agony of hopelessness, "Oh God, this is hell."

Yes, it is hell; if the word is to be retained at all, let it be retained for this of all human experiences, the darkest, the most awful, the most hopeless, the saddest beyond all speech.

But, brethren, it is not a state of mind; it is a condition of the whole life. The central fact in such an experience is not agony of mind, but the alienation of the whole life from all that is high and good and pure and true, whose sources are in God. And what the man wants is not to escape from his remorse; but to be brought back again into touch with the Father.

And when for such a man my words, my pleadings, my encouragements, my promises of personal loyalty, have brought some calmness amid this wild tumult, some ray of hope amid this darkness, some weak sense of remaining power amid all this desolation,

what is that but an earnest that there is a power, not ourselves, infinite love moving with almighty power, which is able to save to the uttermost all who trust in Him?

Prayer

Lord, for Thy tender mercies sake, lay not our sins to our charge: but forgive that which is past, and give us grace to amend our sinful lives: to decline from sin, and incline to virtue that we may walk with a perfect heart before Thee, now and evermore. Amen.

VII

THE TRINITY

"Our Father." —MATT. vi. 9.

"God with us." —MATT. i. 23.

Do you believe in the Trinity?

I BELIEVE in the unity of God. I believe that God is One. In a previous sermon of this series, however, I have endeavoured to explain to you that the unity of God involves the existence within the Godhead of certain distinct activities, or areas of consciousness, capable of relations between themselves.

I gave you certain illustrations, which indeed were neither arguments nor proofs, of the fact that even in the lower orders of life there cannot be unity except where there is difference and distinction.

So the unity of a flower consists in the co-ordination of the different relations subsisting between root and stem, and sap and petal, and pollen and ovary. Similarly the unity of the human body is the unity of an organism, wherein there are several parts, each separate and distinct and yet each within the body; and between which there are constant and definite relations, the realisation of which is the life of the body.

So also, in a higher plane, the unity of a family means the possibility of various relations within it. When you say that a family is one, you mean that

its existence depends upon the realisation of certain relations within it, father son, parent child, husband wife; and the life of the family is not simply the life of the individual members of it, but depends upon the existence and the fulfilment of these inner relations. And there is something more which comes out here.

The whole family is potentially present in every member of it, each member of a family implies and involves the rest. Is it the father? the father involves the child and the wife; I mean that the idea of father has no significance apart from the other ideas of child and mother; or take the brother, the brother implies the sister and therefore a common parentage; and so each member of the family embodies within himself the family idea, each part implies the whole.

Now, will you get and hold that idea clearly in your mind. The unity of the family, what does it mean? It means two things. First, the possibility of inner relations within itself, between its different members; and second, that the whole family is potentially and entirely present in each separate member. We must distinguish carefully between a unity and a simplicity. Think, as illustrations, of the difference between a brick and a house. A brick is one, and a house is one; but the oneness of a brick is different from the oneness of a house. A brick is one because it is a single, simple thing; it is identical with itself; it is a brick and nothing else. But a house is one because it is a complex thing, containing within itself parts which are vitally and harmoniously related to each other, bricks and mortar and wood, foundations and roof, rooms and doorways; the oneness of a brick lies in its simplicity, the oneness of a house lies in its being a complexity whose

parts however are interdependent and interrelated. We could speak of a brick as having identity, but never as being a unity; but a house is a unity because of the difference of the parts within the whole, and at the same time the mutual relation of the parts to each other and each to the whole within which it lies.

You can appreciate the difference between a tone and a chord. You would say that a tone is one, and a chord is one, but the oneness of a tone, is not the same as the oneness of a chord; for a tone is single and simple, but a chord is complex, it is a whole containing definitely interrelated parts within itself. A tone may be said to have identity, but a chord has unity. It is a unity because of the differences that exist within it; a tone could not be a unity because there are no differences within it.

You can appreciate the difference between an atom and a molecule. An atom is the ultimate result of the continuous subdivision of matter. If you go on dividing a substance smaller and smaller until it is impossible by any means whatsoever to subdivide it further, you have got to an atom. And although such a thing exists only in the imagination you understand what is meant when we say that an atom is a simple, single part of matter. On the other hand, you define a molecule as the smallest portion of matter that can exist by itself; and you know that a molecule is made up of two or more atoms. It is therefore not a simple but a complex thing. A molecule of water, for example, is composed of two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen. But these three atoms are not simply congregated together but they are united by certain affinities and held together by certain subtle processes; an atom is one, but its oneness is identity; a molecule is one, but its

oneness is a unity, because of these different constituents existing within it, and whose interrelation with each other, within the whole, is the essence of the nature of the molecule.

These are illustrations only, and hints; but I hope that they may help you to understand that when we say that God is One, we imply that there are and must be within the whole of God certain distinct areas, or centres; areas of consciousness and centres of volition, which are capable of relations within the whole.

But you may say, why cannot God be One in the sense in which an atom is one; why cannot He be absolutely simple and single; why cannot He be a monad? There are those who regard God as the great monad, or the mighty atom, as a single and simple unit.

Perhaps the easiest way for the time being, in which such a question as that is to be answered is this. You believe that God is love; you believe this on grounds which are quite distinct from the doctrine of the trinity which we are now considering. We believe that God reveals Himself as love in the creation which He has made whose consummation we see in Christ. If God is revealed to us as love, He must have been love from everlasting. He could only reveal Himself to be that which He essentially was before self-revelation.

But what does love imply? It implies a subject loving, and an object loved, so that God could not be love if there were no distinctions within the Godhead. Love could not be predicated of a God who was absolutely single; only of a God within whose whole nature there were at least two centres of consciousness or activity between which a relation was possible the realisation of which for God would

be Love. Those two areas we speak of as Father and Son; and we say that the Father loved the Son from before the foundations of the earth; and we say that God loves His creation because His creation is the incarnation of the life of the Son.

Similarly we believe that God is intelligence. But the very essence of reason exists in this that the person is able to conceive Himself as subject over against an object, and the whole process of reason consists in the procession and the retrocession of the subject to and from the object. Intelligence cannot be predicated of a person unless he is regarded as being conscious of himself as existing, and consciousness of self involves the consciousness also of an object over against which the self is defined.

So that it is clear that if God is love and if God is intelligence His nature must be of such a kind as allows of the existence within it of different areas of consciousness which can be placed over against each other, as it were, and enter into relations with each other. In other words, God cannot be simple, but must be complex; cannot be a monad, must be at least a trinity; cannot be a single unit having no inner differences; but must be a unity which is constituted by the interrelation of inner differences and distinctions.

Now we have got thus far; that the unity of God necessitates difference within the Godhead. We must now go on to say why we believe that there are three such centres of activity, and three such areas of consciousness, within the Godhead.

This is not a matter of speculation; but of revelation.

I believe that the unity of the Godhead is a necessary postulate if we are to explain the life of the universe as we come to know it; but the Trinity of God does not follow of necessity from this unity. I

do not think that we could deduce the Trinity of God from His essential unity. The unity requires that there should be distinctions within the Godhead, but whether two, or three, or four, or more distinctions it is impossible for us to say apart from that revelation of Himself which God has given to us.

In other words the doctrine of the Trinity is a brief summary of the facts of God's self-revelation to us.

That revelation is clearly made to us in Christ, who came forth from the bosom of the Father to reveal Him.

That gospel, written by an intensely sympathetic disciple, which, while the other gospels reveal to us more of the outward facts of the life of Christ, reveals to us more of the inner facts of his consciousness, —that gospel according to St John, contains ample evidence from the words of Jesus of the distinctions within the Godhead as He knew them who was one with the Father.

There was in the consciousness of Jesus a clear distinction between Himself and the Father. He prayed to the Father; over and over again He said that the Father loved Him; that the Father sent Him, and that He always did those things that were pleasing to the Father. He was conscious of His oneness with the Father in the unity of the Godhead —"I am in the Father and the Father in Me."—but equally conscious of the distinction between Himself and the Father; for He spake, not of glorifying Himself, or merely of God the Father being glorified in Him, but "I have glorified Thee on the earth, having done the work which Thou gavest Me to do."

And with equal clearness does the mind of Christ distinguish between Himself and the Holy Spirit. "I will pray the Father and He will give you

another Comforter, even the Spirit of Truth, who shall abide with you for ever." This is another than Christ, for Christ speaks and says that He will send Him, and the Spirit shall bear witness of Him; "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth that proceedeth from the Father, He shall bear witness of Me." And again, "for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you; howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He shall guide you into all truth; He shall glorify Me, for He shall take of the things which are Mine and shall declare them unto you; teaching you all things, and bringing to remembrance all that I said unto you."

So that clearly in the mind of Christ there were these three distinctions within the Godhead; Father, Son, Holy Spirit; we know, apart from Christ, that God is a unity; that therefore there must be distinctions and the possibility of relations within the Godhead; Christ teaches us that there are three such centres of activity within the Godhead; God the Father creating; God the Son, the incarnate life of creation; God the Holy Spirit, by whose indwelling energies we are taught to know, and helped to do, the will of God wherein is eternal life, one God and blessed for ever. Revelation does not conflict with reason; what reason suggests and intimates, revelation completes.

But there is this further that appeals to me.

I believe in the transcendence of God; I believe that only one area, as it were, of God is incarnate in Creation; I believe that there are areas of life, recesses of infinite power and wisdom and worth, within the whole of God which have not been embodied within the created life of the universe.

Out beyond the furthest limits of the universe

dwells the eternal God in the shadowless light. I see his power in creation, a power so great that I fall in adoration before it; in the presence of that power which, with awful and irresistible energies, moulds a plastic creation after the fashion of the divine will, I stand in naked humility, and with no language but a cry of deep and fathomless wonder; but I believe that with God there are limitless oceans of omnipotence which lie beyond this inland sea wherein my frail craft makes its way towards the haven.

I stand in mute amaze at the mighty wisdom of God as I can dimly trace it; a wisdom of which our subtlest philosophy, and our most fearless science, touch but the hem; a wisdom which escapes the scan of the mightiest telescope, and the scrutiny of the keenest microscope, and passes away by a path "which the eye of the vulture has not seen" into the infinitely removed chambers of the eternal mind; a wisdom which has hidden within the simplest germ that multitude, which no man can number, of manifold forms whereby nature ascends to its crown in Man; a wisdom as impenetrable in what it permits as in what it prohibits, before whose eyes there lies in calm perfection that which, step by step, with countless struggles, and untold patience mankind is ever becoming.

And what shall we say of the love of God? that infinite and exhaustless love which giving does not impoverish, neither does withholding enrich; a love so incomprehensibly great that the infinite power and the infinite wisdom of God are but as its servants obeying its behests. A love of which I get but glimpses when, on the one hand, I see that all the progress of creation is towards that which is highest, and truest, and noblest and best; and on the other a

love which tingles in the arms of my boy as he flings them round my neck, and trembles in the kiss he imprints upon my cheek, even as the mother-life of the round earth blossoms in the sparkling eye of a spring daisy. A love so self-forgetful as to suffer the unspeakable isolation of the Cross, a love so daring, so majestic, as to answer the Eternal law of righteousness by sending the triumphant cry of mercy resounding through the burning sky, beneath which we men and women struggle and are baffled.

> "Immortal love for ever full,
> For ever flowing free;
> For ever shared; for ever whole;
> A never ebbing sea."

I am no pantheist. We are not blind that we cannot see God in all that is:

> "The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and the plains,
> Are not these, O soul, the vision of Him who reigns?"

We believe that, but this is not pantheism; these are the vision only, the substance is behind and beyond; these are appearance, the infinite reality is far above them; and all that mankind has known of the power and the wisdom and the love of God, is but the hint, the suggestion, the intimation, that beyond all that we can know or think there lie untouched, integral, unimpoverishable resources within the great whole of God.

I can have no doctrine of God which does not include all that I mean by this. God is transcendent.

But He is also immanent. The whole of God is not incarnated in creation and humanity; but I believe that a part, or an area, of the life of God is. The word, which was in the beginning with God, which was God, became flesh. Creation is the

incarnation of the eternal Son. As Apollinaris said, "in the Eternal Word humanity had existence from everlasting within the life of God."

The incarnation of a divine person is not an idea peculiar to the Christian religion; it plays a prominent part in many other religions, in fact it is an idea which in some form or other, crude or developed, is to be found in practically all the religions of the world. The universality of religion argues that the sense of God is an instinct common to humanity as such; the voice of man, I do not say the voice of reason, neither do I say the voice of superstition, but the voice of man, not merely the cry of the human heart, as a matter of sentiment and feeling, but the cry of human nature in all its length and breadth, its height and depth, has ever been "There is God." Sometimes the tones have been tones of fear, sometimes tones of love; but always the cry, "There is God."

But the prevalence of the idea of incarnation suggests a further thing; it suggests that there is a deeply-lying human need which will not be satisfied with a God who is only afar-off, but demands a God who is near; it must not be a God who is out of touch with humanity, infinitely aloof from His creation, but a God who in all our affliction Himself is afflicted, and who careth for us. The crude and superstitious animal-worship of the Egyptians, for example, embodied not merely their belief, but also the necessitous demand of their whole nature, that God should be near, indeed within his creation.

Now, these deeply lying human instincts cannot be meaningless, and their meaning must lurk within the inmost parts of our nature; and for myself, I find no explanation of them save in this, that there is God, and that God is with us. These painful,

fitful strivings of the human mind, this stretching of "lame hands of faith," are the constant witnesses within the developing life of humanity of that supreme fact which burst upon the world when in the brightness of the Father's face, and filled with all the fulness of God, He came, whom the ages that went before, and those that followed have called Immanuel.

The significance of Christ, the incarnate Son of God, is that at bottom the human and the divine are one; and that therefore, since we interpret the whole by the highest, and creation by humanity, and humanity by Jesus, the life of creation is the incarnated life of God.

Brethren, if our vision were limited to the short span of a single generation we might well be bewildered and find God other than we had hoped; but you and I stand to-day at a vantage point higher than the place at which stood any of our fathers, and we can see through the "dark backward and abysm of time" far on towards the earliest beginnings of the human race. The history of the human race is an open book to us covering a period of perhaps more than 5000 years; and what do you see? what do you read? struggle for existence, you say; yes, but go deeper; survival of the fittest, you say; yes, but deeper still; beneath all the struggles, severe and bloody as they have been, beneath all the wayward turnings to the right hand and to the left, beneath all the backslidings, the retrogressions, the falls, you will see, if only the scales of prejudice will fall from your eyes, that there has been but one permanent movement within the life of humanity, and that movement has been an upward movement; the only steps that have counted in the long run have been steps in the direction of the Highest.

Aye, and look around you to-day; you can look around you; you are able to study as men never before were able to study in great broad lines the tendencies of the time; what do you see? wars and rumours of wars, you say; class legislation, the extravagance and the impudent arrogance of wealth, the tyranny of the strong; yes, but this is on the surface, you must look deeper for the truth. That these things are so, and that they are wrong is a fact; but it is a deeper fact, that you see such things to be wrong; and, it is a deeper fact still that, if the teaching of the history of 5000 years is to count for anything, the day is coming when the world will see with you, and denounce and condemn the wrong. The world has so been fashioned that in the long run the right is vindicated, and the wrong is trampled underfoot.

In other words, to-day does not give the lie to the last 5000 years, but the deep tendencies, and the permanent movement of the present is in a line with all the past, and is making for that ideal of divine perfection which was marked long ago in One who trod the green "hills of Galilee that circled quiet Nazareth."

And what does all this mean? It means that the vessel of humanity is not a chartless, compassless, captainless craft, drifting hither and thither upon the ocean of time, at the mercy of the winds and waves; but the hand of the Master is on the rudder, and He knows, and He can. It means, as Browning said, "God's in His heaven," nay, it means more than that for me; and it is so clear to me, that I feel were I to deny it, the very heavens would hurl their thunders and drown the denial into immortal silence; it means that God is with us; the life of humanity at bottom is at one with the life of God.

I do not say that the way is not long; neither do I say that the labour will not be painful; but one day, I know, we shall attain to that ideal of beauty and truth, and perfect, holy life; the life that is Christ's, and shall be ours when we find ourselves in Him with God.

I can have no doctrine of God which does not include this fact also; God transcendent; God immanent.

But there is one other thing which is just as clear to me.

Look at it from what point of view you will, it comes to the same thing in the end.

The eternal counsels of God relating to His kingdom in the world are revealed in Christ; granted: but how are those counsels to be executed? The fountains of our best life are in Christ; but how is the life that dwells in Christ to become ours? As Paul says, eternal life is the gift of God; but it is ineffectual for us unless we can receive it; and how are we to receive it?

Christ is the ideal, but how are we to realise it?

We see the life of Christ to be a life of perfect obedience, perfect trust, and perfect love; and such must our life be, if at the last we are to be found in Him; how are we going to attain to this life? If our life is to be rightly lived, it must be a continual approach to Christ; how are we going to be able to make this continual approach? Listen to the words of Christ: "No man can come unto Me (you will understand after what I have said, the full significance of that) no man can come unto Me, except the Father which sent Me draw him."

Except the Father draw him. We are here in touch with a third activity of God; when I think of God the Father, I think of God as transcendent,

going forth out of Himself, as it were, to create the world; when I think of God the Son, I think of God, as immanent in this creation, progressively revealing Himself in all His power and beauty and love to us who, by creation, are His children, and who, through Christ, are called to be sons; and when I think of God the Spirit, I think of God as indwelling in us, and working in us, that He may bring us up to Himself. Three centres and three areas of activity (I avoid the word persons, which is a scholastic term, and while convenient enough as a formula when you understand what it really signifies, suggests certain perplexities which need not trouble us); three centres and areas of activity, and yet one God. The whole Godhead is potentially present in each of the three; the Father involves the Son and the Spirit; the Son involves the Father and the Spirit, and the Spirit involves the Father and the Son; just as, as I said some moments ago, the whole idea of "family" is potentially present in the idea "father" and in the idea "son."

I am not able to confine the working of the Holy Spirit of God to a period of time subsequent to the departure of Christ from this earth-plane. Neither am I able to confine the working of the Spirit to the Christian Church. I believe that whenever mankind has moved upwards, Godwards, homewards, it has been at the impulse of the Spirit of God indwelling in the heart of humanity. I have spoken of the upward movement, as being the one permanent movement, in the history of man, and that movement I believe to be energised and controlled by the Spirit of God.

I believe that the word is true, that the prophets spake as they were moved by the Spirit of God; and when the principles of their preaching were

transmuted into the principles upon which the nation guided its conduct, I believe that the consequent advance of the people to higher conceptions of truth, and nobler ideals of life, was by the movement of the same Spirit.

As a student of the history of civilisations, I see people passing from darkness into light; coming under the sway of nobler and truer thoughts, and owning the dominion of loftier ideals; and as a student of the history of religion I see races passing from the bondage of idolatries into the liberty of a purer faith; casting forth their gods, in wood and stone, and ceasing to worship in this mountain with a worship confined to the performance of outward acts; and seeking the face of God with purpose of heart, and worshipping Him in spirit and in truth; and in this, whatever be the land, or the colour of its people, however scant their knowledge, and however crude their imaginings, I see the working of the Spirit of God. I believe that on that day which we call the day of Pentecost, the society which Jesus formed around Him became conscious of the indwelling of this Spirit, and in that illumining consciousness, and the strong confidence it meant for them, did mightily, and initiated a movement which through the years has communicated to the highest civilisation the world has known, all that has made it strong and all that has made it sweet.

I think that it is very wrong that any church should suggest for a moment that the movements of this Holy Spirit of God are at its disposal alone, or are limited to its sacraments, or to its officials; but I believe that wherever a heart of man, be he young, be he unlearned, be he without the pale of all the churches, if only he be simple and true, feels the tender drawing of those gold cords wherewith

humanity is for ever bound about the feet of God, and responds in quiet obedience, and sincere faithfulness, he is being led by that Spirit, which ever leads men into the way of truth.

In this sense then I believe in the Trinity; God the Father, transcendent and high over all; God the Son, immanent in all that is, to the end that we may know Him, whom to know is life eternal; God the Spirit, helping us in our infirmities to be that which we were intended to be, that which we long to be, the loyal sons of a faithful Father.

Prayer

O Thou who art Law, and Love, and Light. Thou unchangeable and shadowless God, our Father, grant to us increasingly a heart of humility, and a spirit of obedience; and so help us, we beseech thee, by the Spirit that we, whom Thou hast called to be sons, may walk worthily before all men, and finally, by Thy mercy, may come to Thine eternal peace. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

VIII

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Do you believe in the Immaculate Conception?

It is only after considerable thought, and some anxiety, that I have determined to address you on this question. But having made up my mind to do so, I am sure that no good purpose will be served, if at the end you are to be left in some doubt of what my view is. In other words, the only alternative in this matter is either silence, or perfect frankness.

At the same time, it is obvious that before an audience of this character, the subject must be treated upon the broadest lines; and the details of the class-room must largely be omitted.

I take it that the majority of us will know that there is a difference between that which is spoken of as the IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, and that which is spoken of as the VIRGIN BIRTH of Christ; the Immaculate Conception being a Roman dogma which concerns the sinlessness of the Virgin Mary. But at the same time it is clear that it is not my view upon this Roman dogma that you want; so that it would be the merest fencing if I were to content myself with a reply to the letter of this question and say that I do not believe in the Immaculate Conception, that is, I do not believe in the sinlessness of Mary the Mother of Jesus.

Neither is it at all satisfactory that the answer to this question should be couched in such a form as this: "There are many noble, spiritually-minded Christian men who do not find it necessary to believe in the Virgin Birth; but at the same time I do not see the need of explaining the narratives of Matthew and Luke away." Such an answer suggests more serious questions than the one it pretends to solve.

And it is only one degree more satisfactory to say that a belief in the divinity of Christ and all the fundamentals of an orthodox Christianity, are quite possible without a belief in the Virgin Birth of Jesus; for exactly what you want to know is how and why this is so.

Over and over again has it been said of late that if only the mass of the people knew what is to be known about these matters they would never be led astray by articles such as those which have of late been appearing in the *Clarion*. I believe that; but how are the people to get to know what is to be known? and who is the one to tell them?

If the pulpit is to be silent upon these matters, or is to deal with them in such a way as to commit itself to nothing—how are the people to know; and how can they defend and save themselves when the wolf is at large within the fold?

It is doubtless easier to hold a safe middle course; and hard enough to have to part company with good friends and true; but truth is an imperious Master, and when he goes before, we, who know his voice, must follow him.

Perhaps the most convenient point from which to start a discussion of this question is in this, that the doctrine of the Virgin Birth grew up within the early Christian Church in order to account for the sinlessness of Christ in the face of a belief in original

sin. We all know, in a general way, what that doctrine of original sin was; that the results of the fall of Adam were inseparable from all the children of Adam, the common father of humanity; that sin attaches essentially to humanity by reason of the first sin of Adam; that therefore all who are descendants of Adam are, for that reason, sinful. So that if Jesus were a descendant from Adam in the same way as are all men, the sin of Adam must transmit its taint to Him also, and He would be, in virtue of His human nature, sinful. This could not be admitted for one moment, and so they devised a theory of the birth of Jesus which would cut Him off from contact with the stream of sin flowing from Adam, and they said that Joseph was not His father.

Later on it was thought that the taint of sin from Adam might just as well be transmitted to Jesus through His mother as through Joseph; and as it was impossible to deny the motherhood of Mary they postulated the sinlessness of Mary in the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception; which, while it was a logical issue of the whole theory of original sin, brought the theory to an absurdity; for the sinlessness of Mary must have demanded the sinlessness of her parents, and so on, until the very foundations of original sin are taken away. And if an act of God could make Mary the Mother sinless, such an act could also have made Jesus her son sinless and therefore, under this supposition of the interference of God, there was no need to assume the sinlessness of Mary.

All of this suggests that there was some underlying mistake. What was that mistake?

I believe in the sinlessness of Christ. I believe that the consciousness of the Christian Church was

illumined with the truth when it was maintained that Jesus knew no sin.

If our conception of the nature of Christ is correct, that He was the incarnation of that Ideal Humanity which from everlasting has existed within the life of God, then His sinlessness follows of necessity. And the facts of His life, and the efficacy of His life, confirm this. Christ as the Eternal Son within the Godhead must be sinless, though the term is not really applicable here; and so Jesus, as the Incarnate Son, although tempted in all points like as we are, must yet have been without sin.

I believe in the sinlessness of Christ, but I also know that sin has nothing whatever to do with the body.

This needs a little explanation, though it should be familiar to those of you who are regular attendants at this church.

During the course of our life we are continually being confronted with choices; we are continually finding ourselves in circumstances when we must take one of two alternatives. And very often it happens that these different appeals to our will come from quite separate quarters. We speak of one as being lower, and the other as being higher.

Whence comes the lower appeal? it comes from the body undoubtedly. We inherit our bodies from the long line of organic creatures, and indissolubly interwoven in the very fibre and tissue of our bodies are desires, appetites, and tendencies which demand to be realised. Their satisfaction is moreover attended by certain acute pleasures and this increases the strength of their appeal.

Obviously it is not always wrong to satisfy these demands of the carnal nature; and therefore obviously there is nothing wrong in them of themselves. If I thirst, I may drink.

But within our whole nature there are areas from which other appeals may come, also demanding to be realised. And because these appeals arise from our intellectual, æsthetic, and moral nature, they may legitimately be called higher, in contrast with the appeals of the flesh, as such. They have developed within us as man has progressed in thought and in ideal and in conduct under the influence of the social organism. They are the appeals of conscience, of honour, of duty, of truth, of mercy, and so forth; and the unselfing demands of those larger areas wherein our life abides, the home, the city, the nation, and humanity.

Now, there are frequent occasions in our lives when appeals from each of these quarters stand over against each other, and simultaneously lay siege to our wills.

If we may again lay that familiar figure, the drunkard, under tribute, there is on the one side his glass of beer, representing the lower appeal, the appeal of the flesh; and on the other side there lies the demand of health, the joy of his home, the voice of conscience, the sense of duty to others, the instinct of what is right, and so forth; and between these two appeals he must choose.

I do not for a moment insist that all the cases are nearly so clear-cut as this; but I do insist that in all the cases out of which sin may arise there is at bottom, if we can only come right down to it, this choice between two.

When does sin arise? It arises here. When in the presence of two alternatives, two appeals, two paths, one of which is lower and one higher, the will, being free to choose either, chooses the lower instead of the higher; there is sin; there, and nowhere else.

There can be no such thing as inherited sin, for sin is a question of the will of each man acting in the circumstances in which he is placed; we may inherit tendencies towards weakness and lowness, but these tendencies are not in themselves sin; the sin lies not in the possession of a tendency to a certain weakness, but in our wilfully yielding to it; choosing it, that is, instead of a higher course, when this higher course is possible to us. The tendencies possess, in themselves, no moral quality; a moral quality attaches to the act of the will with respect to them.

But you may say, is it not possible that these inherited tendencies may be so strong as to plunge a man into sin in spite of himself? Up to a certain point I admit that, and it opens a question which is extremely important but upon which we cannot dwell here; all that I am anxious to say concerning it now is, sin presupposes freedom of choice; and tendencies strong enough to realise themselves in a man in spite of himself suggest that this freedom of will does not exist in regard at any rate to that particular act; and where there is no freedom, there is no responsibility, and where there is no responsibility, there is no sin.

Sinlessness, therefore, is not a question of the absence of any inherited tendencies; it is a question of the strength of will, and not of the weakness of the body; it is a condition of the will, and not of the body. Sin does not attach to the body, but to the will. So that it is perfectly open to us to believe in the sinlessness of Jesus without taking His body into consideration at all. And I believe that had not the theory of original sin involved this error, that sin is inherent in the human body, the question of the manner of the birth of Jesus would not have

arisen. At any rate it is suggestive that it did not arise until a period in the history of the thought of the Church when it seemed essential to preserve the sinlessness of Christ, by attributing to Him a fundamentally different body to that of other men.

I go further. Is there any evidence to show that Jesus inherited those tendencies towards weakness and lowness of life which we regard as characteristic of the human body? Was He really touched with our infirmities? Was He really tempted in all points like as we are? I think that the evidence is clear and unmistakable. No one who is really unprejudiced in this matter can for a moment close his eyes to the fact that Jesus had a human body, as truly human as is yours or mine.

It is true of superficial matters; we believe that the form of Christ's body was as ours; we believe that He grew, as we grow, and that there was that gradual unfolding of the physical, intellectual, moral, emotional, and spiritual life, as with us.

Intellectually, and emotionally, He was one with us; He grew, as we grow, in wisdom; He thirsted, and He hungered; He was weary with journeyings; He was loved humanly, and responded with human affection; He was angry, and He wept; true human pain, and true human joy, entered into His life; He had that intensely human longing for the society of His fellows.

And that this likeness to humanity was not superficial is proved as we enter more deeply into the meaning of His sufferings. Jesus was tempted. Will you think for a moment what that means? There are some words in the epistle to the Hebrews which are worth your attention; speaking of Christ, the writer says: "who in the days of His flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with

strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and having been heard for His godly fear, though He was a son, yet learned obedience by the things which He suffered, and having been made perfect, He became unto all them that obey Him the cause of eternal salvation." (Heb. v. 7-9).

What do these words signify? They signify that the temptations of Jesus were real temptations; temptations which meant effort, and resistance for Him; meant conflict and suffering for Him.

Now, this conflict could not have been external to Christ's nature; the conflicts with real temptation are always internal conflicts; the source of the temptation, or perhaps rather, its occasion, may be external; but the conflict is within; and any temptation from an external power would have no meaning for a life which had not within it something, some element, to which the temptation could appeal.

When, therefore, we say that Jesus was tempted, we must of necessity mean that there were within His human nature those tendencies towards a weaker and a lower life against which it is necessary for us to exert our wills, and which form for us the internal ground for our temptations.

In other words, if the temptations of Christ were real, there is a proof of the existence within His nature of those very elements which the doctrine of the Virgin Birth was propounded to exclude.

And there is another matter which we must take into consideration here; that it is meaningless to predicate sinlessness of a nature that is incapable of sin. To apply the term lifeless to anything suggests that it is at any rate capable of life; and the word loveless has no meaning if applied to a nature incapable of love; and so to speak of a nature as

sinless implies a capacity for sin on the part of such a person. If our analysis of sin has been correct, then evidently sin is only possible to a nature which has within it possibilities of both a lower and a higher life; and only to such a nature, capable of choosing the lower, is it appropriate to attribute the idea, and the title, sinless. So that we seem to be shut up to an alternative. We can say that Christ was incapable of sin; then the temptation of Jesus, (if it was absolutely impossible for Him to sin), is "no longer for us the dark shadow of an intense spiritual struggle, but a kind of dramatic piece of stage-craft, without any of the elements that go to make reality." If Christ was incapable of sin, then He certainly could not have been tempted, and we can never think of Him as in any real sense being tried, or putting forth effort, or praying for strength to resist, or triumphing gloriously. And the fellowship of Christ with us in the keenest of earth's sufferings is a baseless sentiment, for if He was by the very constitution of His body incapable of sin, then He certainly was not "tempted in all points like as we are."

The other alternative is that Christ was sinless; that He was without sin, not because He was incapable of sinning, but because He would not sin. His temptations were real; there was, therefore, within His nature some point of appeal for these temptations; and therefore His body, like ours in other and more superficial ways, was like ours also in the possession of those hereditary tendencies which so often become for us the voice of the tempter.

And this further point in passing on; the idea of Virgin Birth involves that Jesus was a perfect being to begin with; the point in the Virgin Birth is that Jesus was cut off from all those inherited imperfec-

tions which constitute the base of so many human infirmities, and entered the world a perfect nature. But all the evidence of the gospels and the epistles is against this; for we read, "It became Him for whom are all things and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons into glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering"; Christ grew, therefore, not only in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God and man; He also grew morally; was not a perfect being to begin with, but was perfected through suffering.

Let us pause for a moment to see how far we have come; I believe in the sinlessness of Christ; but sin attaches to the will and not to body; my belief therefore in the sinlessness of Christ does not necessitate any corollary concerning the extraordinary nature of His birth. But the sinlessness of Christ involves the existence within His nature of a capacity for sinning, some point of appeal for temptation; and therefore the body of Jesus was exactly as our bodies, in outward form, in structure, in emotional elements; and also in those deeply lying tendencies which we inherit from our ancestry, and which so often seduce our wills from the truth.

And the suggestion of all this is that the body of Jesus was a truly human body, and that He entered this earth-plane through purely human processes.

I think that the fundamental reason in my own mind why I do not believe in the Virgin Birth of Jesus lies in this, that the theory is quite unnecessary; if sin cannot be inherited, and if sinfulness therefore does not attach to the body as such, there is no need to postulate a Virgin Birth to account for the sinlessness of Jesus. We gain nothing by the theory; it is only an incubus of gratuitous difficulties; it proves more than it means to prove; it goes beyond the sin-

lessness of Christ and implies an incapability of sinning, which reduces the temptations and the trials of Jesus to vanity. I do not deny the possibility of Virgin Birth; I am no expert, but I believe that there is abundant scientific evidence of parthenogenesis; what I deny is its utility; and when I am speaking of the things of God, to deny utility, is to assert non-existence.

If I believe, as I do, that at bottom humanity and divinity are one; that the divine Christ is the incarnation of the human side of God; then it is not merely unnecessary, it becomes foolish, for me to endeavour to preserve His divinity by the assertion of a fact which denies His humanity.

I say, "denies his humanity," with deliberation. The doctrine of Virgin Birth involves a denial of the perfect humanity of Jesus. For otherwise, if by a special act of creation God formed a true human body for Christ, that is, as truly a human body as would have been formed in the ordinary processes of birth, nothing is gained; for on the hypothesis, the product of the miracle is no different from the product of ordinary human birth: that is, either the miracle was useless or the humanity of Christ unreal.

But I ask you to consider the alternative for a moment; supposing that my view is wrong; supposing that Jesus was born of a virgin; that in His case that union of two lives which is necessary to the formation of a third throughout the length and breadth of humanity was put on one side; and that therefore the body of Jesus, being like ours, was a "miraculously constructed organism fundamentally different from ours." Suppose this; and what follows? Two things of great importance follow; and they must be faced.

In the first place the human life of Christ as we

read of it in the gospel story is a semblance; it looks like a human life, but in reality it is not a human life. That which grew in stature was not a truly human body, but a miraculously constructed organism which was like a human body. Jesus seemed to have a human mind working through a human brain; He seemed to develope a moral perfection in conflict with temptations and trials and disappointments and sufferings; He seemed to live a life under limitations, being a Jew, and of a particular Jewish line; He seemed to be all this, but really it is seeming only; it is all imitation —in a body which in structure and composition differed fundamentally from our own — of those operations and functions which properly belong to the natural body of a man. "His flesh and blood," says the Vicar of Yardley Wood in the current number of the *Hibbert Journal* (October 1903) "were not natural flesh and blood, but something corresponding thereto, in a new kind of miraculous organism. He ate and drank, He spake, He moved from place to place in semblance only. It was all a part played for our edification. His temptation was a splendid dramatic action. He humbled himself in appearance only, for He did not take on Him the elements of the lower out of which man has emerged as a physical organism in nature, which constitutes this body, the body of our humiliation, and creates the very conditions of the moral conflict for us. His death was a simulation; for how can we imagine that God, in creating a new kind of physical organism by a special miracle, would endow it with the very elements of corruptibility which (by the hypothesis) are the result of the sin of man? His birth was not a natural birth; He was not truly conceived; He had the semblance of man."

You must admit this; you must admit that the body of Christ was by virtue of the Virgin Birth fundamentally different from our own; for if it was not fundamentally different from our own, then there is no reason to suggest a Virgin Birth: nothing is gained thereby; and if the body of Jesus was fundamentally different from ours, then the human life which He seemed to lead—the temptations He suffered, the sorrows He bore, the conflicts He passed through, the death He died—was not our human life; His was a counterfeit humanity.

And in the second place this follows; such a being, fundamentally different in structure and composition from us, can never be an example for humanity to follow. If Jesus was what He was, and was able to live the life He lived, by virtue of the possession of a nature fundamentally different from mine, though in appearance like mine, what possible use can He be to me as an example for my life. It is the sheer mockery of a delusive and unattainable ideal that I should picture to you the beauty, the sweetness, the courage, the patience, the love which the life of Jesus manifested, and exhort you to strive and strain after this height, if Christ was all this by reason of His difference from us in nature.

Peter speaks on this wise: "leaving you an example, that ye should follow His steps; Who did no sin." And this must mean that it is possible for us—in spite of the things that flesh is heir to, in spite of human weaknesses and lowness—it is possible for us to follow in the steps of the sinless One until we sit in heavenly places with Him; it implies that there is no height of moral worth which is absolutely incompatible with our human nature; and Christ Himself said the same thing, in those well-remembered words, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as

your Father in heaven is perfect." And so we struggle on towards the ideal; we shirk not the labour, neither do we shrink from the Cross; we endure hardness, pressing forward that we may attain. But, brethren, in what is our hope of final attainment rooted? Is it not in the fact that Jesus has passed on the way before us; that He was tempted in all points like as we are, and yet stood unshaken in the high strength of God; that we have always the sympathy of Christ who was tried and afflicted even as we are, and the quickening consciousness of His triumph; that we have fellowship with Him in all our sufferings; but see how this hope is shattered if so be that Christ is different from us, as Bishop Gore says, "in the fundamental structure of His manhood?"

When we are surrounded by our enemies that seek our lives to destroy them, we think of Christ, and say to ourselves, "We will be like Him; serene, patient, confident"; when we suffer disappointment and baffiement, we think of Christ, and say to ourselves, "we will be like Him, calm, unmoved, able to endure"; we can stand the fire if within it we can see the form of the Son of Man, suffering with us; and when we are in the thick of life's temptations, and all our noblest and best life seems for the moment to be in hazard, and we feel that in our strength we can neither stand nor conquer, we take the bible and we read these words, "Wherefore it behoved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people; for in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted"; and then, lo, the very foundations that are beneath our feet give

way; for He was not made like unto His brethren in all things; He has not suffered, being tempted, like we are tempted; He cannot call us brethren, for we are not all of one; He is immeasurably removed from us, not in the perfection of His nature being like unto us, but in the radical difference of His nature from that which we bear. And the darkness as of an eternal night comes over me for I "have no longer a Christ who is the great High Priest of redeemed humanity."

And sometimes in the calmness and the love of a reverent and humble imagination I watch on Calvary with the dying Saviour. I see the pierced hands and feet; I see the crown of thorns pressed deep into that pure brow, and staining that sacred face; I see the riven side; I hear the cry of dying agony; I gaze upon the Man of Sorrows, "slain for man, slain for me," and thoughts come thronging into my mind, thoughts of love, of devotion, of self-sacrifice, such thoughts as we so often sing together,—

> "When I survey the wondrous Cross,
> On which the Prince of Glory died;
> My richest gains I count but loss,
> And pour contempt on all my pride."

And then like a bolt from the blue this great interrogation is flung into my mind; that brow, that side, those hands, those feet, are not human like mine; those sufferings cannot be like mine; I cannot appreciate them; they have no relation to my nature, because they attach to a being who is fundamentally different from me. God the Father could only save me by a process which works through my nature, and He can no longer be my Saviour whose nature is different from my own. The death

of a being who is not truly human cannot in any wise be realised in my human nature as the way of salvation. And I cannot accept a miracle at the cost of my hope of salvation.

As I stated at the outset, I have treated this question on broad lines; I have dealt only with underlying principles, and the issues that are involved in the doctrine. I desire, however, before I close, to make one or two brief statements with regard to the teaching of the New Testament on this matter.

Definite statements as to the Virgin Birth occur in the Gospels according to St Matthew and St Luke; but it is now fairly agreed among scholars that these narratives are in both cases an addition at a considerably later period to the original narrative. In other words, the birth stories of Matthew and Luke are not the basis of the doctrine of the virgin birth, but themselves owe their existence to that doctrine; the doctrine was not derived from the narratives, but the narratives were derived from the doctrine.

The birth stories are inconsistent with other parts of the gospel narrative; for example, if the virgin birth is presupposed in the gospel narrative of Luke what can have been the purpose in giving a genealogical line showing the descent of Joseph? Evidently when that genealogy was written there was no thought that Joseph was not the father of Jesus, and subsequently, when the doctrine of the virgin birth had been propounded and the birth story inserted, it was indispensable to insert the words "as was supposed," —Jesus being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, —in order to square the birth story with the genealogy.

If you will read the second chapter of St Luke carefully you will find clear indications that the fatherhood of Joseph and not the virgin birth is

presupposed, otherwise one cannot account for the surprise on the part of the parents of Jesus at the words of Simeon, or the words of the child Jesus himself; and thrice the evangelist mentions the "parents" of Jesus; and in two separate verses both the father and mother are named. In the twenty-second verse the evangelist speaks of the "days of *their* purification" as being fulfilled; this is an error, because only the mother needed to be purified, but the fact that Luke, in error, mentions the purification of the father shows that he at least believed in the fatherhood of Joseph.

It is perhaps well known to you that the writings of Paul are, in the main, earlier than the gospel narratives; and that Paul had no idea of the virgin birth of Jesus is shown, not merely by his silence on a matter which would have provided him with a powerful argument which he would doubtless have been glad to use, but by his usage of language with respect to Jesus which is incompatible with the idea of the virgin birth. In the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans he speaks of Jesus being born of the seed of David according to the flesh; in the eighth chapter of the same epistle he speaks again of Jesus as being "in the likeness of sinful flesh," and as, in Paul's view, the sinfulness of mankind was to be traced to descent from Adam, he could not have made such a statement had he held the doctrine of the virgin birth.

There is an important passage in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians where Christ is said to have been "born under the law that He might redeem them that were under the law"; in other words, that in order to be their Redeemer it was necessary that Jesus should be completely like those He came to redeem.

The suggestion of all this is that there is nothing in the original writings, so far as we are able to get at them, of the New Testament, to support the theory of virgin birth.

In summary, my view is this; since sin attaches to the will, the fact of the sinlessness of Jesus does not necessitate His having a body in any way different from our own; that He should have had a body different from our own, would involve this, that His temptations, trials, efforts, sufferings, could not be in any sense those to which by our human nature we are heirs; it would also make it impossible for Him to be our Ideal, or our Brother, or our Example, or indeed, our Saviour. We therefore seem to stand to gain nothing by the doctrine, and to lose everything.

I do not expect that all of you will agree with me: I have spoken to you fully and frankly; and only ask you to think upon these things, so that you may know each where you stand.

Prayer

Our Father, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we come unto Thee through Him who took upon Himself this body of our humiliation that He might lead us back to Thee; we thank Thee for His fellowship with us in our sufferings; for His helpful sympathy with us amid temptations which He too has known; and we pray Thee that we may get us more of the mind of Him who in all things was subject to Thy will, that the world might be saved. Deepen our reverence; increase in us a godly fear; and at the last bring us, through Him our Saviour, to Thine eternal joy. Amen.

IX

THE DEVIL

"Oh Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself."—HOSEA xiii. 9.
"Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed."—JAMES. i. 14.

Who or what is the DEVIL?

THERE are two very important things I want to say before I come to the heart of this matter.

The first is this, that there cannot be a dualism in the universe. What do I mean by that? I mean this, that no explanation of the universe can be deemed satisfactory which leads us back to two ultimate elements as the original cause of all that is. In explaining the universe we are met face to face with an extraordinary complexity, and the explanation of the universe consists mainly in the unravelling of that complexity, and showing it to be the result of the combination of simpler elements; and on and on the reducing process must go until we reach an ultimate which cannot be further reduced.

It is the imperative demand of the human mind that that ultimate should be one; there have been, as you are aware, systems of philosophy which offer an explanation of the universe by reducing all things to two ultimates; *e.g.* one they call mind, and the other is matter. And we are told that we cannot reduce either of these to anything more simple; and

the two are totally and absolutely separate and distinct. The one never passes over into the other; physical energy never by any chance becomes psychical energy; It may change from heat to electricity, and from electricity to light; but through all its changes never crosses an inviolable line which separates matter from mind. These are the two ultimates; and the whole universe can be explained from the developments and actions and interactions of these two elements. That is what I mean by a dualism; that there are two distinct and separate ultimates from which the universe as we know it has been built up.

There never has been a period in the history of the world's thought when such a dualistic position as this has gone unchallenged; there have always been men, and it is their thought and work that has lived, who have been unable to find rest for their minds in a dualistic conception of the universe; who have felt that the universe cannot possibly be a duality, must be a unity. And the descendants of these thinkers and seekers now hold practically the whole field of modern thought. The best science, the highest philosophy, the purest religion at the present moment blend their voices in an ever-swelling chant of praise to

> "One God, One Law, One Element,
> To which the whole creation moves."

The mind refuses to rest in a dualism; we cannot stop with mind and matter as two separate and distinct ultimates; we cannot admit the possibility of a permanent schism; either mind or spirit must be shown to be a function of matter; or matter must be shown to be a function of spirit; or the two things, matter and spirit, must be shown to be but

different manifestations of some one element behind them. So long as we have a dualism the mind cannot possibly rest, but must seek and work and push back and back; and though baffled in many directions must still work on; for there is a certainty so inherent in the human mind as to be practically a necessity of thought, that whatever the ultimate may at last be found to be, the universe must, for good or for evil, be at bottom ONE.

Now this argument does not apply only to the dualism of the physical universe, but it applies to any dualism; it applies equally to the moral universe. A dualism is as inadmissible in the moral universe, as in the physical. If there is an apparent dualism in the moral universe we are under a necessity of thought to get behind it some way or other and reach a monism; a single principle, instead of a dual principle.

Now, in far remote times, the facts of the moral life were explained on a dualistic principle. As I have told you, Zoroaster, the great Persian philosopher, taught that there were two principles, a principle of good which he called Ormuzd, or light; and a principle of evil which he called Ahriman, or darkness. The one was the ultimate cause of all the good in the world, the other the cause of all the evil in the world; they were fundamentally distinct, and eternally, necessarily separate.

There is evidence that this Zoroastrian dualism had its influence upon the Hebrew mind, and that in the later books of the Old Testament there was the idea of Satan as a principle of evil over against God as the principle of good; and that even in the New Testament times Beelzebub was practically, though not entirely, the Persian Ahriman.

The same conception lingers among us to-day in

those ideas of the devil in which, either in cruder or more refined forms, he is regarded as a principle of evil necessarily separate from the principle of good, and absolutely in antagonism to it.

But just as it is true that dualism in natural philosophy has never been without its challenger, so neither has dualism in moral philosophy ever proved acceptable to all the best minds. And we find in the Old Testament that while the dualism of good and evil was admitted in some quarters, yet a seer like Hosea repudiates the suggestion, and proclaims to Israel, "It is not thy circumstances that have destroyed thee: neither thy God; neither some principle of evil incarnate in some Satan; but thou hast destroyed thyself." And in the New Testament, in the face of all the theories of the origin of evil both physical and moral, in the malignant work of devils or of some prince of devils, James proclaims with the true insight of a practical philosopher, "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed."

The human mind can no more rest in a dualism of good and evil, than it can rest in a dualism of mind and spirit. There is good and evil, just as there is mind and spirit; but they are not two separate and mutually irreconcilable ultimates; one of them must be prior to the other; or there must be some element prior to them both, the ground of both. For good or for evil the moral universe is ONE.

This must be one of our fundamental positions; and as Christians we believe that God is first, and therefore good is first; and if we inquire into the origin of evil, we cannot admit that it is an eternal, self-existent principle co-ordinate with God, for that would mean an eternal and fundamental schism in

the moral universe. Neither can we admit that God created evil, for creation is a development of the true nature of God the creator; and that He should have created evil would therefore mean that within His nature there is an evil principle corresponding to the outer evil He created. Hence we are compelled to the conclusion that evil in its ultimate nature is relative, is only capable of definition in relation to good, it is "the perceived privation of good": and evil, practically in human life, is only one aspect or issue of human freedom, for the freedom to do good implies necessarily the freedom to do evil, the freedom to obey implies necessarily the freedom to disobey, sin is lawlessness on the part of a will created for, and capable of, obedience.

Now, that is one important point, there cannot be a dualism in the universe; there cannot be two ultimate principles, one of good and one of evil; there cannot be any devil in the sense of an independent spirit of evil; such an independent spirit of evil must be either uncreated, *i.e.*, eternal, self-caused, self-existent; which would lead us to an eternal schism in the universe which is unthinkable; or created, which would mean that there must be a corresponding principle of evil within the personal nature of the Creator, which is also, for us, unthinkable; or, as an independent spirit, as an ultimate principle, it must be non-existent—which is my view. I do not say evil is non-existent, that would be absurd; it is non-existent as an independent and ultimate principle; it exists only in relation to good.

The other important matter which I want to suggest to you is what is known as the law of parsimony. The word "parsimony" means "stinginess"; it means making as little as you possibly can, do. It is

embodied in the well-known scholastic formula "entia non sunt multiplicanda"; factors must not be multiplied. In philosophy, *i.e.*, in the explanation of things, it means that you must explain things in the simplest possible way, with as few elements as you possibly can, consistently with a true and satisfactory explanation. If anything is capable of satisfactory explanation by certain factors known to be operating, you must not drag in any other superfluous factors. This is not a law of man's device; it is a law which exists in nature itself, and which men have extracted forth from nature during their investigations of her processes; a law which almost every day is receiving confirmation from many quarters.

Examples. Take a simple one and crude but which is typical of all others. Lightning. Of old when they saw lightning they explained it by saying that Jove, angry on Olympus, was hurling his thunderbolts to terrify or to slay offenders. That was a simple explanation; but when people began to think, they discovered that they knew neither Jove nor his thunderbolt; and they tried to explain the phenomenon by something that they did know; the result is that to-day we can explain lightning quite satisfactorily by such known things as electricity and tension and so forth; and the law of parsimony says that if lightning can be explained by the operation of known causes, you must not go out of the way and introduce Jove and his thunderbolt. If you can explain satisfactorily the origin of the rainbow by certain known results of rays of light passing through raindrops as through prisms, the law of parsimony forbids you to drag in any other natural or supernatural factors.

If you can satisfactorily explain consciousness by

the motions of brain molecules—I do not say you can, I do not believe you can—but if you could, then the law of parsimony would forbid you to bring in any other higher or lower factor into the explanation. If you could satisfactorily explain Christ by His human history, and His human environment—I do not say you can, I do not believe that you can—but if you could, the law of parsimony would forbid you to introduce any supernatural element into the explanation of Christ's personality and life. If you could explain conscience as a natural development in man resulting from his coming together with others in the form of a society—again I do not say that this is possible—but if you could, the law of parsimony would forbid you to introduce into the explanation of conscience any such factor as a special gift, or a special divine endowment. If the origin of life could be explained by the combination of certain known chemical forces and processes, the law of parsimony would forbid you to explain the origin of life by postulating any unnecessary supernatural cause. And so on, we might go for a long time.

If you can explain anything satisfactorily by the operation of known causes, or by the combination of known elements, you must not drag in other, and, because the explanation is complete without them, unnecessary elements of any kind.

Apply that to the matter in hand; if Hosea could explain the threatening destruction of Israel satisfactorily by causes which he could point out in the rebellious will, or the idolatrous practices, or so forth of the nation, he was compelled to say not "God hath destroyed thee"; or "Satan hath destroyed thee"; but "Oh Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself."

If James, the Apostle, was able to explain temptation by the known facts of human nature, he was compelled to say, not "Every man is tempted when the devil comes to him and allures him with his wiles"; but "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed." And if I can explain the origin of moral evil on the ground of human freedom, I am compelled by the law of parsimony to be content with that explanation, without postulating the unnecessary—I say unnecessary, because *ex hypothesi* I can explain moral evil without it—existence of an evil spirit outside of me, an ultimate principle of evil in the universe opposed to an ultimate principle of good. And if I can explain my temptations by the known facts of human nature, I must rest satisfied with that explanation without postulating the existence of an outside Tempter.

Having made these two points plain, as I hope I have, the way forward is quite clear. For I shall not admit the existence of the devil, as a spirit or principle of evil outside of me, approaching me from without, and tempting me, if I can satisfactorily explain my temptations from the facts of my own nature. Let us come to experience.

When we survey human experience as a whole we cannot help but come to the conclusion that there does exist within the area of that experience a spirit, a principle, a tendency which urges us in the direction of evil; ever since human nature was, the presence of this tendency has been known; for ages it has been called the devil, or Satan; we have all felt its power, its subtlety; to deny its existence somewhere and somehow would be to deny the facts of common experience. It is no mere imagination that we are tempted every day

of our lives to do that which is wrong and mean and unworthy. What is the cause of this temptation? You say it is the devil who tempts you. Then who or what is the devil? "The devil" is only a name after all which has been used from the earliest times with differing meanings, but with reference to the same fact; what does it signify for us, here and now? That, I take it, is the point we want to get at; the point which it is well for us to get hold of clearly. We are all agreed that it is some secret, hidden power; some subtle influence; but can we locate it? can we see it? can we touch it? can we come to grips with it? if so, we shall have some chance of dealing with it; if not, we have no chance whatsoever. Now, let us come to the facts as we experience them without prejudice; let us clean the slate of all preconceived notions; and examine our experience as calmly, as unemotionally, as philosophically as we can.

I cannot examine your experience, I can only examine my own, but we are all on the same plan.

Yesterday you were tempted to do wrong; the temptation came suddenly, silently, quick as breath; somehow or other your attention was drawn to the wrong doing, your interest was aroused in it, and you experienced a tendency to desire it; you mentally and morally, if not actually and physically, moved towards the sin. That is the fact that we have to explain; the important question is, did that temptation come primarily from without or from within? Was it some spirit who prompted you to sin; some spirit coming suddenly upon you, acting quite independently of you; unawares seizing you, as it were, and impelling you towards the wrong action? Was it some spirit who somehow or other seemed to get inside your mind, and grasp the reins

of your will; and who, as soon as you had yielded, fled and left you? Some external agent possessing for the nonce your powers? a spirit who can come and go as it listeth? who dogs your footsteps and waits the favourable opportunity? or if you like, who lies dormant in you and awakes when you are off your guard? some entity separate and distinct from yourself? This, I believe, is a very general idea; the idea of an invisible, ubiquitous, spiritual devil, who whispers, as it were, in the ears of your heart.

Now, I am not here to dogmatise, so that I will not say at once that that is a false idea altogether; but in the light of what I have said to-night it suggests several questions.

This spiritual devil lives and acts with power; he must therefore have come into existence somehow, and have received his power for evil from somewhere? How and whence? Is he uncreated, self-existent? then you have an impossible dualism, a schism in the universe of God. Did God create him? then, since creation is a development of the divine nature, there must be a principle of evil within the divine nature; and God is not altogether and absolutely good.

Or supposing that you say that the spirits of rebellious angels, or of evil men who have perished, can take up their abode in the bodies of human beings, and live on there, achieving their evil purposes through them. That is a possible idea; the most recent and authoritative book of the psychical research people countenances this idea; affirms the reality of such possession by alien spirits. But two questions arise; do such evil spirits enter my body with the sanction of my will? then the sin so far as I am concerned is in that act of permission, and

I am responsible for all that follows, not directly, but indirectly through the permission which I am supposed to have given. Or do such evil spirits enter my body without my permission? as I protest they do in my case if they are there at all. If this is so, if I am the habitation of an evil spirit who feeds his own evil desires through my body, and entered there without my permission, what becomes of my free-will? if this spirit uses me for the purposes of his sinful satisfaction, am I responsible for him? Can God with any justice call me to account for the sins of my body, which are in reality the deeds and the desires of a spirit which has taken up its abode in me; which is independent of me; whose coming I neither willed nor invited; and over whom I have no control? Nay, I will not have it so; if this is the cause of my sin, I will dare, frail creature as I am, to stand before the presence of God and cry that it is unjust, it is unkind, it is cruel beyond words that I should be punished for such sin.

> "Oh Thou, who didst with pitfall and with gin
> Beset the road I was to wander in,
> Thou will not with predestined evil round
> Enmesh, and then impute my fall to Sin.
>
> "Oh Thou, who man of baser earth didst make;
> And ev'n with Paradise devised the snake;
> For all the sin wherewith the face of man
> Is blackened—man's forgiveness give—and take."

Surely that is not the solution; it is a solution which solves the problem by either destroying the goodness of God, or the freedom of man.

But there is a further alternative. The temptation may have come from within my own personality; from within my own self; I myself may be my tempter.

Supposing I am a drunkard; but I have seen for a moment the error of my ways, and taken a pledge to abstain from intoxicating drinks. Then one day I pass a drinking house, resplendent with gaslight, reeking with alcoholic perfume, and resonant with the joviality of drinkers; something seems to say to me, "Come along, have a friendly glass; have a chat with chums again, nobody will know; it won't do you any harm; you can take a glass and then leave; what's the use of being a man if you cannot stand up against temptation; come on, don't be silly and afraid." And in I go, break my promise, and add another coal to my hell-fire. "The devil tempted me," I say in my later remorse, seeking to excuse myself; as if that horned, cloven-footed thing came behind, and tapped me with his fingers on my shoulder, and spoke seductively in whispers in my ear; "the devil tempted me." What do I really mean when I say that? What are the facts? Do I not mean that the old passion awaked within me, the old craving returned, the evil desire re-asserted itself, the lower, sensual worldly nature in me, the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth rose in power to the throne again? The sights, the scents, the sounds, were the *occasions* of the temptation, not the *cause*. I hesitated for a moment; that hesitation meant a conflict; a conflict between my higher self and my lower self; a conflict between duty, honour, right, the welfare of others, the claims of manhood, and pleasure, indulgence, carnal appetite; and my will chose the lower instead of the higher; those are the facts; that is what I really mean; and who then is the devil? It is MYSELF.

Take another example. You love the truth, but one day things so turned out that you were put

in a fix and were at a loss what to do; you saw that to tell the truth meant disgrace, perhaps ruin; and while you hesitated and thought on this side of the question you could almost be certain, so vivid was the experience, that something or somebody whispered in your ear, "you will be a fool if you say the truth; nobody will know if you lie; and you can soon put things to rights when it is all over; lie it out." And the falsehood rose to your lips and sped forth beyond your recall.

You will note in passing that our forefathers were right to put crucifixes at cross-ways; it is at cross-ways that you mostly meet the devil.

As a result of your falsehood you were in a few days in a worse predicament; the lie recoiled on you; and when driven to a corner you blurt out, "It's all the devil's fault; he tempted me." What do you really mean? What are the facts?

You mean that in a choice between your skin and a lie you chose the lie to save your skin; that your manliness was overpowered by your cowardice; that your weak human nature gave the lie to your divine courage. You hesitated before you told the falsehood; that hesitation meant a conflict; a conflict between your higher and your lower self, your instincts of truth and right and nobleness, and your lower instincts of fear and self-preservation of the lower order; and in the end you deliberately chose the lower instead of the higher. That is what you really mean; those are the facts; and who then is this tempting devil? It is YOURSELF.

Your lower nature, never in this life completely ridded; your evil passion never completely put to quiet; your selfish motive never for long at rest; this is the devil. "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed." And if

you chose the lower instead of the higher, and do so often until a habit is acquired, until finally it becomes practically impossible for you to resist the lower impulses and realise yourself in the higher life, then the whole truth will be found, and the complete explanation, in the words of the prophet, "Thou hast destroyed thyself."

You may not accept this belief to-night, I think that you will some day; it alone explains all the facts in a satisfactory manner. Test it for yourself in your own life; test it with questions which are constantly recurring. For example:—

Why does the devil always tempt you in a particular way? Why does he never tempt you in certain ways in which he tempts others? Why does the devil know so intimately all our weak spots?

I suppose that we used to explain that by saying that the devil is "more subtle than all the beasts of the field"; that his wisdom is omniscient; and that it was true of him as it is true of God that he "knoweth our downsitting and our uprising, and understandeth us altogether." Is it not more satisfactory to explain this intimacy of temptation as being due simply to the peculiar facts of our own private nature asserting themselves? You are tempted in certain ways, not because there is a devil who has made a study of your character and knows all your weak places, but because you have either inherited or acquired tendencies in certain directions which are strong enough to lay a powerful siege to your will; and I am not tempted in that particular way because those tendencies in me are not so strong, or because other tendencies are stronger.

And the same temptation keeps on recurring and recurring, not because the devil is a fine tactician and keeps hammering away at your weak spot until

you have altogether surrendered; but because every time you yield to this tendency, you are gradually forming a habit of yielding which becomes stronger and stronger with every fall. So that your temptation is not an external devil finding your weaknesses out; but it is really your strong tendencies towards wrong and unworthy acts finding your weak will out.

The occasion of the temptation may be without; but the cause of it is always within.

Or again, why does the devil leave us when the sin has been done; and how does he know just when to return?

Every desire, when it is satisfied, ceases for the time being; when I am thirsty, I drink. The thirst represented a demand of certain portions of my organism which were not able to perform their proper functions owing to lack of moisture; I provide them with that moisture; they begin to function normally again; and there is rest from the desire until the conditions again alter; at bottom it is entirely a question of physiological conditions. Or say that at this moment you are besieged by an appetite the end whereof is sin; what does that mean? It means that at certain parts of your body there is an accumulation of vital energies and consequently a heightened activity: and at the same time there are in the focus of your consciousness certain ideas connected with this appetite and its realisation which draw your attention and your interest to themselves. Now, when such a state of things arises, two issues are possible; either these accumulated energies and these heightened activities realise themselves in their own peculiar way, and you yield to the temptation and sin; or you are able by a definite effort of will to divert your attention and direct your interest to another quarter, and so

drain off the energies accumulated in that particular part, and the temptation passes. In either case the activity is ended, the energy is dissipated from that particular centre, and the appeal to your will ceases. And the temptation only arises again when the tissue and the nerve energy exhausted by this activity has been recuperated, and, through causes which lie wholly within your nature, there has once more accumulated a sufficient supply of vital energy in those parts from which your temptation comes.

We are most of us familiar enough with country life to know that on many a hillside there are intermittent springs of water, springs which now flow, and now cease to flow. What is the explanation of that? There is a subterranean cavity there within which water can accumulate from many drippings and trickles; as the rain percolates through the soil and rock, this cavity is gradually filled with water, and one of two things must happen, either the cavity must be filled to the brim and then overflow, or else a quiet process of drainage must go on, and the gathered water find an outlet otherwhere. Is it not exactly so with our temptations? In certain parts of our organism where our weakness is centred, there is going on in quiet and unseen ways an accumulation of energy, stored in blood and tissue and nerve; and one day the cup is full to the brim; that is the hour of temptation; and unless this accumulation of energy can be drained off somehow by activities initiated in other directions, the cup will overflow, and your appetite will realise itself and you will sin. But after this overflowing, there will again be a period of peace, until there has been another accumulation tending to another overflow. You may speak of the devil leaving you and again returning, but this is only a picturesque and figurative expres-

sion of the facts of human nature as I have tried to explain them to you.

And why does the devil not tempt you when you are in your best and highest moments? The simple answer is, that we have only a limited store of vital energy, and if we are using it for the realisation of high and noble ends, it is not free to be used for the realisation of low and unworthy ends.

And why does the devil get a stronger hold on you if you yield to him, and why if you resist him does he flee from you? Here again the simple answer is in the formation of habit. The oftener you act in the direction of a certain habit, the easier does it become to act in that way. But you can cultivate a habit of resistance as well as a habit of yielding, and to cultivate a habit of resistance means that it becomes easier for you to resist, and you become more successful in resisting.

And why is it that

> "Satan trembles when he sees
> The weakest saint upon his knees"?

The reason is here, that our lives are not only in communication through our bodies with the lower creation from which our temptations arise, but they are also in communication on their higher side with God who is a fathomless resource of communicable strength; and when, in prayer, you put yourself in active communication with that infinite and inexhaustible supply, you find strength which is sufficient for all your days, and grace to help in every time of need.

These and other questions can be answered satisfactorily upon the lines of the thoughts I have suggested, and I do not know how otherwise they can be answered. Will you try and catch yourselves in

a moment of temptation and see where the suggestion really comes from; see where the real cause lies; and you will find, if you analyse your experience, that you have left no place for the sole of the foot of an external ultimate principle of evil.

Who knoweth the spirit of man which goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast which goeth downward to the earth? The spirit of the beast is the devil, we have located it; it is within us; it is our lower, baser, earthier nature and its tendencies; it is our evil heart, it is the product of the past evil of our lives, and indeed the product of the past evil of the lives of others; it is an ever-present influence, it is a constant menace to our life's truest joy and our soul's most perfect life. I believe that we can do a great deal to conquer these temptations ourselves, and what we can do, God expects us to do. But if your experience is at all like mine, you will find that you cannot win your way through to safety and serenity in your own strength; and this is the gospel that is preached to you who are struggling to do right and fighting for the mastery; God is nigh to all them that call upon Him; and He willeth not that any should perish, but that all should have eternal life in Him.

Prayer

O ever righteous God, and Father of eternal love, who cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance, and before whose eye our iniquities lie naked, mercifully hear us as we confess our sins unto Thee, and create within us a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within us. Hide not Thy face from us, put not Thy servants away in anger. Restore unto us the joy of Thy presence, that we may walk with a perfect heart before Thee now and evermore. Amen.

X

THE BIBLE

"No prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation."—2 PET. i. 20.

Do you believe that the Bible contains the actual words of God and nothing else?

A COMPLETE answer to this question involves a consideration of two facts. First, that the original words used, say, by Moses or Isaiah or the evangelists, were the actual, real words of God Himself; and secondly, that these original words have been accurately transmitted to us at the present day. There is the question of the text, and the question of the theory of inspiration.

I am going to suggest to you that it is quite impossible that the received text, whether Hebrew or Greek, should contain the actual and original words of all speakers and writers, and nothing else. I am also going to suggest that the fact that we have not in all cases the original words spoken or used, and indeed have no means of getting at them, need not create any uncertainty or alarm; because the inspiration of prophets and psalmists and evangelists did not lie in the actual words they used, but in that which they saw and felt; the point of view from which they saw it, and the way in which they felt it, and the purpose for which they expressed their

visions and their deepest feelings. All that the prophets and writers saw and felt of God could never have been adequately expressed in words, and the meaning and spirit of their utterances lives on, even when the form of expression changes; and while we can never be sure that we have the actual words, we can always be sure that we are in touch with the spirit and truth which inspired the original words, because the bottom test of an inspired word is its power to inspire.

Shall we consider for a moment our received text.

We have a received Hebrew text from which our Old Testament is translated. The date of that Hebrew text is about 900 years after Christ. This was the first Hebrew manuscript that contained punctuation marks, vowels and accents. Let us think of this.

Isaiah prophesied in the reign of Uzziah, King of Judah, and the date of his prophecies was about 740 years before Christ. Between the days when the prophecies were spoken, and the time when our received text was compiled is a period of over 1600 years.

When this Massoretic text was compiled all existing manuscripts were burned; and there is no means of getting behind this text to see how far it was accurately in accordance with tradition, or to find light on obscure passages, except a Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures known as the Septuagint, which was made between the years 250 to 135 B.C. When you remember that that Greek translation was made from a Hebrew manuscript which had neither punctuation, vowels, nor accents, and that it was a translation of Hebrew into a language of altogether different spirit and genius, you will understand how difficult and precarious its use must be in any attempt to restore the original text.

During all these 1600 years, between the time when Isaiah spoke and his words were stereotyped into our Hebrew text, what had been happening? Let us assume—which in itself is a tremendous assumption—that the originally written words were the actual verbatim words of Isaiah; those earliest MSS. were copied and copied and copied, and to begin with were written in a different form of writing from that in which later MSS. are written. It is clear that in the passage from one form of script to another opportunities for unconscious and unintended alterations and mistakes in the text would abound. The copyists doubtless endeavoured to preserve with utmost accuracy the text as they received it; but the process of copying a MS. in which there were no divisions between either words or sentences or paragraphs was beset with tremendous obstacles to accuracy whatsoever the intention of the worker; and the copyists were human beings after all; some may have been careless, and some may have been learned in all the tradition, themselves theologians of no mean order; but on both scores, either through carelessness or through a desire to convey the right meaning according to their views, the copyists were liable to make mistakes and alterations and interpolations.

But these MSS. when copied had to be read; and learned by heart and recited. Now there are many Hebrew words which have exactly the same consonants; and where all the difference of meaning, all the difference between a noun and a verb, between an active, or passive, or reflexive form of the verb, is indicated, and can only be indicated, by the pronunciation; that is, by the punctuation and vowels and accent supplied by the reader.

As I have said there were no vowels or punctua-

tion marks in any Hebrew text until the year 900 A.D.; and while one may readily admit that those who inserted the vowels at that time did all they could faithfully to preserve the traditional interpretation, yet human nature and limitations being what they are, it must have been impossible to do so with perfect and unmistakable accuracy; the very emendations given in this Hebrew text itself bear witness to that.

Even, therefore, supposing that we admit that the words spoken by Isaiah in the first instance were not his words, but the words of God who used him simply as an organ player uses the keys and pipes; we cannot hope that all these words have with strict verbal accuracy been handed down to us even in the oldest Hebrew text we can read; to say nothing now of the fact that some portions of that Hebrew text absolutely defy translation.

It was to meet some such difficulty as this that the Rabbis propounded their theory of the inspired penman; that in some miraculous way God watched over the copyists, guided their hands and kept them from making mistakes, so that the latest copy was an exact reproduction of the first. But this theory brings with it even greater difficulties than the one it pretends to solve; for apart from the fact that such mechanically contrived influences are alien to any true conception of inspiration, the text as we receive it is found to contain such contradictions that if certain parts are true, it is obvious that other parts cannot be true at the same time.

In the book of Genesis, for example, there are two accounts of the creation; and the two accounts contradict each other in statements of alleged facts; evidently both cannot be true together.

You know that in the book of Joshua an account

is given of the conquest of Canaan by the Israelites; and an account of the same historical process is given in the book of Judges. In Joshua, we are told that the triumph of the Israelites was immediate, catastrophic, and complete; in the book of Judges, we are told that this was not so, that the children of Israel did not drive out the inhabitants of the land, and the dwellers in the strong cities, but arrived at some form of compromise, and settled with them. In the one case, the victory of the Israelites is stated to be an altogether inconceivable sweeping away of the population of Canaan by a series of magnificent, bloody, and final triumphs; in the other case, the conquest of the land is very much more prolonged, and takes place not so much by great battles, but rather by the processes of attrition and assimilation whereby the stronger race gradually subdues the weaker.

Both these accounts cannot be true together. You may say that one is later than the other; and this is probably so; but as the two books pretend to be each a record of actual historic facts, it is clear that the idea that both accounts are due to the actual communication of facts from God, the idea, that is, of verbal inspiration or inspired penmanship, cannot possibly be held in the face of such fundamental contradictions.

This is the case with the Old Testament; and what is the case with the New? Simpler, doubtless, in many respects.

The text from which our English translation, in the revised version, has been made is a text based upon a great number of MSS.; some 2000 in all; but it may be safely said that seven eighths of the received text is found in all MSS. of prime importance.

The oldest Greek MS. dates from the fourth century, practically 300 years after the death of Christ; but we have a large number of references to the gospels and the epistles, and a considerable number of quotations from them, in much earlier writings, so that there is little danger in maintaining that in the main we have the original words written by evangelists and apostles.

But this fact would not at all enable us to hold, even with respect to the New Testament alone, a theory of verbal inspiration; and to say that the New Testament contains the words of God and nothing else.

There are cases in which it is difficult to decide what the genuine text is; and there are cases where what has been handed down as a genuine text is on examination a manifest forgery; cases, too, where a palpably inferior text has been used in translation.

For example, there is powerful evidence, which to most men now is practically convincing, that the final verses of St Mark's gospel, all the verses after the eighth, are a later addition, and did not appear in the original gospel. The words of 1 John v. 7; "There are three that bear witness in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one";—words which often have done duty for a cogent argument as to the Trinity, do not occur in any MS. written before the fifteenth century and are doubtless an interpolation; or a forgery, if you like. In Matthew xix. 17 you read in the authorised version, "Why callest thou me good"? which is a translation of a text which is not supported by any of the best MSS.; so that the true text and the true translation there must be, "Why askest thou me concerning the good"?

Now there are many such cases, some of them of high importance, in which we can only conjecture what the original text may have been by weighing the value of MSS. over against each other, and scholars differ as to the results obtained; that is, there are many cases in which we cannot assert for certain that the original words have been preserved for us; and in the presence of this fact it is impossible to hold to any theory of verbal inspiration, or to say that the words of the bible are the words of God and nothing else.

After saying all this, I think that I may be justified in appealing to you not to regard the bible as if it were not to be dealt with and handled like any other book of vital importance.

When it has been suggested to you that some parts of the bible are allegory, and some legend; that some parts are of later origin than others, and some parts contradict each other; some of you have been very horrified that such things should be said about the bible, and have protested about such liberties being taken with the text; and you have wanted to know what you are to believe of what you find in the bible, and where must this process of criticism stop.

There are limits to criticism; but those limits are not to be found by denying the right of criticism altogether.

That is the alternative; you must either put the bible under a glass case and forbid it to be touched, or you must allow it to come out into the world and take its place among the thoughts and lives of men; and it can only take its place among the thoughts and lives of men in so far as it is brought into relation with the present contents of human knowledge and of human life.

The bible is not the only word of God; nature is the word of God; the progressive life of humanity is the word of God; that is, nature and the life of mankind are embodiments of the thought and the purpose of God; you may turn the bible into a museum relic if you like and put it into a glass case, and let a cherub guard it with a flaming sword crying, "hands off"; or you may regard it as the vessel of a living message; not for any private interpretation, but with a real meaning for every age and for every race; in which case you must allow it to be interpreted by that other scripture written in the wonders of creation, and in the greater wonders of the heart of man.

There is no special sanctity attaching to the words of the bible as such; no sanctity attaching to them which does not attach also to any words which embody ideals of beauty and truth; and the sanctity attaches not to the words as such, but to the truth that underlies them.

You ask me as to which parts of the bible you must believe; the only satisfactory answer that I can give to that question is this; you must believe everything in the bible which you find you must believe. There are passages in the bible which contain truth that compels belief from me. Let me give you some.

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth"; I believe that; why? Not simply because those actual words occur in the bible, but because those words embody a truth apart from which I find it impossible to explain the world and nature as I have come to know it. I may not interpret those words literally in the same sense as did the first man who wrote them; but what does "literally" matter? The truth that he meant, I mean, that this world

and all that is in it is the expression of a thought, an idea, an act of God.

"God created man in His own image"; I believe that; why? Not because those words happen to be in the bible; not because I accept literally the meaning which was obviously in the mind of the man who first wrote them; but because they embody a truth which he expressed in his way, and which I express in mine when I say that the whole meaning of the creation of man lies in what man is becoming rather than in what he is; lies in the ideal towards which he is moving; in the perfect manhood as seen in Jesus; and I believe that that ideal, wherein alone lies the true meaning of man, was with God and in God from before the beginnings.

And when Isaiah and his fellow prophets cry out to the nation that their sin is destroying them, and that only in righteousness and obedience can they hope to stand; I believe that; why? Not because the words as I read them in the bible are necessarily the actual words which Isaiah used, neither because I have any idea of their being the actual words of God; but because I know that the truth they embody is unshakable and constant throughout the whole history both of the individual and of the race. I believe them, because the contents of my own knowledge and the contents of my own life compel me to believe them.

"Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish but hath everlasting life"; I believe that; but again for this reason, that there are and have been experiences within my own life which I should find it hard to explain to you, and which might not in any sense be your experiences, but which irresistibly compel from me a responsive Amen to the truth which those words proclaim.

And there are, on the other hand, words in the bible which do not compel belief from me, and concerning which therefore I hold myself free either to believe or disbelieve.

Solomon tells us that if we spare the rod we spoil the child. I do not believe that; as I interpret the words they embody a principle which, according to the clearest judgment I am able to form, is quite opposed to my conception of the right development of morality, and the true cultivation of character; and I would not believe them if a hundred Solomons should say that they were true.

Paul expresses certain views upon the relation of women to men and the place of women in society; he doubtless had excellent reasons for his views; and doubtless found sufficient justification for them in the state of society as it existed for him; but in my judgment the circumstances which gave those reasons their force have passed away, and I am not obliged to accept his views and believe in what he said, simply because Paul said it, or because such and such words happen to be in the bible.

You will doubtless agree with me; and the result is that the bible has been brought out of its glass case; and you admit the province of a rational criticism.

I suppose that there will be very few of you here who will not admit the province of criticism; but many of you are anxious that that province should be limited; and of course it is impossible that it should be limited by anything save the bounds of possible knowledge itself.

Brethren, this bible of ours has got to stand fire from the surest and furthest reaching guns of all departments of human knowledge; of late years these guns have increased both in power and in range;

great strides have been made in such studies as archæology, philology, psychology, and the comparative study of religions; and each of these has a definite, distinct, and important bearing upon the bible; our bible has to stand this fire, and are you afraid for it as it stands in the midst? Standing there and simply asserting steadily, calmly, confidently its one claim to be a message of revelation from the Father of Spirits to His children.

You may well be afraid of it if you are holding hard to some theory that says that the book contains the words of God and nothing else; you may well be afraid if you imagine that it is any part of the purpose of the book to teach science, or history; you may well be afraid if you believe that there attaches to the very words some mysterious sort of sanctity, quite apart from their correspondence with facts; but if you believe that the words of this book, written by different men at different ages, some of them prophets, some singers of sweet songs, some framers of laws, some chroniclers of events, some writers of biography, some dictaters of epistles—if you believe that these words do in very deed and truth embody God's Word to you; His message to you concerning His own nature, concerning His relation to you, and yours to Him, concerning His purpose for you, and the way in which that purpose of eternal life may be realised—then have you no cause for fear.

The critics are concerned for the most part with the vessel; and so long as you can drink of the water of life, it cannot be a vital concern to you as to the exact nature, composition, authorship of the vessel in which that water comes.

We are now told that, for example, the basis of the laws of Moses is to be found in the laws of Hammurabi a Babylonish monarch who lived in the

time of Abraham; that therefore the laws of Moses were not specially and supernaturally communicated unto him during some private interviews with the Almighty, but were the result of the illuminated intelligence and the divine common sense of a cultured alert leader of men, who, having to mould the laws of a people, looked around to find out what was in his judgment and for his purpose the very best in all the other laws that he could get to know. Well; is there anything very alarming in that? Those who object to higher criticism are up in arms at this suggestion of the indebtedness of Moses to a heathen king, and to a heathen, although a higher, civilisation. I have not had the time as yet, and if I had, I should perhaps not be sufficiently expert to decide between the critics and their defenders; my only point at present is, What does it matter whether Moses got his laws from God directly upon Sinai, or from God indirectly through the gradual working out of His divine plan and His divine purpose in the rising civilisations of men?

Let the critics fight the matter out for themselves; and when they have settled it, the bottom truth will remain no clearer then than it is now, that the world is a moral order, and humanity proceeds on a moral principle, which has its prime roots in the nature of God who is the eternal law of righteousness.

Surely none of you will tell me that you accept the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" because it was supernaturally communicated thousands of years ago on Sinai. Surely none of you will tell me that commandment would have less cogency with you in your conduct, if it should turn out that Moses got it from God through Hammurabi, and not from God through the thunders and the shinings of Sinai? That law has authority with you by reason of your

dwelling within a moral order whose development, and your own within it, is guided by principles which are at bottom inherent in the nature of God and His humanity; and it is a matter of only secondary importance as to how or when or under what form or through what channels those principles were first enunciated in the history of mankind.

The extremest of the critics tell us that only three and possibly not even three of the psalms usually attributed to David were composed by him. Well; supposing that they are right? You must be a strangely constituted person if the value of a psalm for your life and your spiritual experience would be in any sense diminished if it should turn out that it was not written by the man you thought it was. The psalm is there; its message is there; and it helps you for what it is; for what God says to you through it; what else matters?

Although the words still remain in the bible "The epistle of Paul the apostle to the Hebrews," critics are now fairly well agreed that Paul did not write that letter. Some of the critics tell us that Paul did not write the epistle to the Romans. Now these questions of authorship are enthrallingly interesting to the student; and supposing that the most extreme of the critics is wrong, and Paul did write the epistle to the Romans; you have the epistle and nothing more; and supposing he is right; you still have the epistle, and nothing less. You have still the eighth chapter of the epistle; you have still those magnificently triumphant words: "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Your belief in the truth of those words and the inspiration of their message to your straining, struggling life, are not dependent upon the question of who wrote them.

But are not the critics attacking the integrity of the gospels? There at any rate you think that criticism should stay its hand; this at any rate should be the sacred preserve of the believer. If they speak truly when they say that the fourth gospel was not written by the disciple that leaned on Jesus; if they point out contradictions in the narratives; if they question the miracles; if they say that the statement concerning the Virgin Birth of Jesus was a later interpolation; what are we to do? are not the very foundations of the Church shaken?

No.

The foundations of the Church of Christ, brethren, are not laid in the gospels; "other foundation shall no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus"; the churches found, not on the gospels, but on the Christ. The gospels are the product of the church; the church is not the product of the gospels. This church is not founded on this book; but on the Christ who is present in power "wheresoever two or three are gathered together in His name."

Do you forget that the church existed for more than a generation without any written gospel whatsoever? What kept the church alive in those days, those days of strife, struggle and crisis, sterner than any the church has ever witnessed since or ever will witness; what was the dynamic of the church in those days, that sent it spreading with the rapidity of fire among dried sticks from city to city and from land to land? What was it that kept it together; that made it stronger than all its enemies, stronger even than its own mistakes? It was not the gospels,

for gospels there were not; it was the presence of the power of the Risen Christ among His people wheresoever they gathered together. And has the matter changed? have we substituted for the living Christ a few pages of sacred literature?

No, we have not.

When you come to think about it, it is in this that the value of the gospels to you depends; that in them you find mirrored the Christ that is in you, and in whom you, and the church, stand. The Christ that is in you is mirrored in the Christ that is in them; and you know that the Christ that is in them is real, because you know that the Christ in you is real. The Christ to which your experience bears witness, the Christ to which the accumulated experience of the church bears witness, the Healer, the Teacher, the Leader, the Saviour, is the same Christ to which the gospels bear witness; the proof of the Christ of your experience does not depend upon the proof of the Christ of the gospels; rather is it the Christ of your experience and of the experience of the church which establishes for you the reality of the Christ of the gospels.

Supposing that the critics should be able to convince you that the Christ you see mirrored in the gospels is a somewhat distorted image, a little out of focus, not delineated in every part of Him as clearly as could be wished, on account of some weakness or flaw in the mirror? Would that make you any less confident of the reality, and the integrity of the Christ in you, which you see mirrored there.

Suppose they should be able to smash the mirror? Would that destruction of the image destroy also the reality in you? nay rather, would you not find the same Christ mirrored a thousand times over in every fragment that was left?

Brethren,

"With Christ in the vessel,
I smile at the storm."

I ask you to put out of your mind all prejudice, and say whether this position does not appeal to you as being stronger, more stable, more hopeful, more true, than any slavish, idolatrous clinging to the mere word and letter?

I hold no brief for the critics; they need no apology; their work needs no defence; they are men of immense learning; they are most of them, I will believe, men of the highest moral integrity, and many of them men of the deepest faith; they are not all infallible, but they are sincere; and the fire shall try every man's work, and only the pure truth shall remain.

Your attitude towards them and their work must never be one of fear and trembling; you may be incapable of following their steps; all their labours may seem to you to be the useless weaving of infinite and unnecessary perplexities; but when you are bewildered amid the questionings, and weary of the uncertainty, and hopeless of a happy issue, you have a safe and calm retreat; of your own experience of God, and of God in Christ, of your own inner and inexplicable surety of Him in whom you have believed, and your quiet confidence in Him to whom you have committed the keeping of your soul, they, and no one, can ever rob you. Only, within that innermost shrine, the holy of holies of the Temple, let no unkind or uncharitable thoughts come; and in the quiet and the calm you will sometimes pray for those who toil with the heat and the burden, that the Father of all Truth may keep their steps and guide them into the way of Peace.

Prayer

Oh Thou, who hast given us the Scriptures for our instruction and profit, but who art Thyself the Way and the Truth of Life—illumine our minds, and inspire our hearts, we beseech Thee, that we may see and follow Thee in all Thy ways. Make us more sensitive to Thy Presence, and more conscious of Thine indwelling, more submissive to Thy control; that at the last we may be like unto Thee in Thine eternal glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

XI

EVOLUTION AND CREATION

"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."—GENESIS i. 26.

Do you believe that man has been slowly evolved from lower forms of life; or that he was created by God in the likeness of His image?

THERE was a time when people took the first and second chapters of the book of Genesis to be a kind of geological and physiological primer, and believed that the world and all that is in it was created in the particular order, and in the catastrophic manner, suggested there; that the process occupied six successive days, and that of living things each member was created perfect of his kind; that out of the dust of the ground God made the body of a man and then breathed into the clay figure the breath of life, and out of one of the man's ribs, formed Eve, the mother of all living, both man and woman physically perfect, and morally perfect.

We have moved away from that position, we do not now believe that it is at all part of the purpose of the bible to teach geology; what there is for us to know about the method and the order of creation, is being slowly revealed to us through nature itself, interpreted by the light of reason, and where we used to see special creation we now see evolution;

and where we used to believe in the formation of different species by specific acts of the Creator, we now see one incarnated uncreated life progressively manifesting itself in manifold forms.

We do not know absolute truth; truth, for us, is that hypothesis which best explains the facts as we know them; and because the theory of evolution does this for us, we say that it, and not a theory of special creative acts in succession, is the truth for us; although, in saying that, we do not affirm that we know all there is to be known about the modern theory, or that there are not difficulties and obscure problems yet to be solved; we simply say that according to the highest knowledge we have as yet attained, this theory gives the best explanation of the facts as we know them; therefore it is true for us, and so far as it goes. All the main facts of knowledge that have been disclosed since the theory was formulated go to confirm its essential truth.

The value of the biblical account of creation lies in its suggestions concerning God and man, and God's relation to man; that God was in the beginning, and that creation was an act of God; that man is the crown and consummation of creation; and that the life he lives is a communicated life, breathed into him from the Highest, and that he wears the likeness of the image of the Creator.

I am sure that no good purpose can be served in trying to establish harmonies between the biblical account of creation and the results of modern science; many such ingenious attempts have been made, but they have no apologetic value; many of them are very fantastic, if not ridiculous; and those which are reasonable do not strengthen the authority of Scripture in its essential teaching; neither do they weaken the authority of right interpretations of nature

in their essential teaching. On the other hand none of the facts of nature interpreted under the theory of evolution either threaten, or do any violence to, the spiritual facts proclaimed by the bible; on the contrary they bring unexpected and forceful confirmations, which indeed was only to be expected, if the matter had been seen steadily, for if nature is revelation of God, and Scripture also revelation of God, it is impossible that, when both are rightly understood, there should be any antagonism. Any schism that is apparent in a twofold revelation of One God can have its ground only in the imperfection of our knowledge, and the limitation of our understanding.

So far, therefore, as the physical facts of man's nature are concerned we do not work from the account of creation as given in the book of Genesis, and it is not necessary either to establish or criticise that account from this point of view. The story of the world has been written in another authoritative Scripture and is to be read there.

There are certain interesting questions which arise concerning the Hebrew creation stories, but upon which it is impossible for us to dwell here. If they are not literal statements of facts, are they to be regarded as allegorical, or mythical? why should there be two stories? and are the stories original with the Hebrews, or due to borrowing from some external source?

These are matters with which criticism is legitimately concerned, and upon which, at present, there is by no means unanimous agreement. So far as I am able to form an opinion, my position is this, that the two stories belong to different periods in the history of Israel, the second story, in the second chapter, being earlier than the first; the earlier story dating from before the Exile, and the later

story from after the Exile; the earlier being probably, and the later almost certainly, due to the borrowing and assimilation of Babylonish material.

We have now in our possession the original cuneiform texts of a considerable portion of the Babylonian creation story, and it exhibits remarkable parallels and remarkable contrasts with the Hebrew story; the parallelism suggests connection; and the only question is whether the Babylonian story is a mythological elaboration of the simpler Hebrew story, or whether the Hebrew story was borrowed from the Babylonian and represents an epic or a narrative-poem, from which, by a long process of elimination, the mythological elements have been purged, and the story purified, by the spiritual influences of the Israelitish religion. To this latter view I am personally inclined to adhere.

Behind these simple and naked statements you will understand that there lies a great accumulation of arguments and counter-arguments, which, for the time being, we can afford to pass over, because whatever the date and the origin of the story of the creation in the book of Genesis we have seen that, in so far as it deals in detail with the facts of physical creation, it has been superseded by a theory whose truth is continually being confirmed from all sides.

The inspiration of the Hebrew account of the creation lies in the purpose for which it was given, and in the point of view from which it was regarded; the essential facts in it are the beginning and the end, that God created, and that the crown of creation is man. The intermediate details of the creative process were viewed by the Hebrews in one way, and by us in another; and in so far as the knowledge of those details depends upon accurate

scientific observation and experiment, we are much more likely to be right than they were.

Now, having placed the story in its true perspective we are free to continue our examination of man's relation to the rest of creation, and his relation to God the creator. And we say distinctly that man has been slowly evolved from the lower forms of creation.

This may be proved on both general and particular grounds. On general grounds in this way. A close and minute scrutiny of all the forms of organic life reveals the fact of the fundamental unity of all organic life; we may call it vegetable or animal, or human, but at bottom it is one; it springs from the same origin; we are able to trace the more complex forms back to simpler forms, the more definite back to the less definite, the highly organised back to the little organised; and when, starting either from the vegetable, the animal or the human organism, you trace back to origins, to simplest forms, you find the same form at the commencement of each line—a cell containing protoplasm, the physical basis of life.

I suppose that there is no fact capable of such unanswerable proof in the whole realm of science as this, that from a single cell, capable of reproduction by a process of subdivision, capable too of assimilating external matter as food, capable of sensation and of motion—from this single cell have come, by a process of natural development under the condition of active and reactive influences on and from environment, all the forms of life as we know them to-day, in their grandeur, their complexity, and their numberless multitude.

It is a fact which is now quite a commonplace even to our children that this body of ours, with all its

wondrous parts and powers, is made up of millions upon millions upon millions of cells, all of which come ultimately from one single cell, containing within it a germ of life. The same statement would be true of a horse; the same statement would be true of an oak tree. And the original nucleus of life is in all three cases the same.

So that man, so far as he is a physical organism, is no exception to that unity which is manifested throughout the length and breadth of organic life. And whatever we may have to say of the evolution of man, this is certain, that the fundamental simple basis of man's physical organism is the same as the common basis of all other and lower orders of organic life.

Let us proceed a step further. There was a time when there was no human life on the face of the earth; certain conditions of climate, temperature and atmosphere were essential for human existence; and it is certain that the earth had been in existence for a long long time before ever man appeared. But he was preceded by other forms of organic life; trees and plants, and certain animals lived upon this globe prior to man; this is abundantly proved by the fossils found in the various rock-strata of the earth's crust.

When, therefore, man appeared on the earth there was already in existence an abundant and prolific organic life, with which, as we have already seen, man is fundamentally, so far as his physical nature goes, at one.

The only question, therefore, is as to whether man's appearance was due to a special creation, or whether he arose by a natural process of evolution from already existing organic forms.

Working from the fact of the fundamental unity of all organic life the presupposition is in favour of the

latter alternative; if there was already in existence all that was needed for the upbuilding of the human body, an act of special creation was unnecessary. And this presupposition is borne out by certain important and interesting particulars concerning the structure of the human body.

The facts brought to the light of common knowledge by the study of embryology, physiology and anatomy, are sufficient to convince any unprejudiced mind that our bodies have been handed down to us from earlier and lower orders of creation.

The human embryo starts from the same point as the animal embryo, and its history, as it develops from the single cell with its drop of protoplasm through forms ever ascending in the scale of organisation and complexity, is the history of the development of the species "writ small."

I suppose that we are all aware of certain facts of embryology of which the following is an example: At the sides of the head of the human embryo are four slits through which there is an open passage into the interior of the head; these are still called "gill-slits," and are a relic of the time when the not-human ancestors of the human body lived in the water and breathed through gills as the fish do. Of these four gill-slits, two develop into ears; the other two are sealed in most cases, though it is a common occurrence for a child to be born with the useless slits still visible, and in some cases the slits have been quite open and through.

In the eye of everyone of us there is a little piece of curtain, as it were, draped at the side, which is the surviving relic of a semi-transparent curtain, which, as we know, many of the lower animals are able to draw over the eye for the purpose of cleaning the surface.

At the end of the vertebral column in the human body there is a relic of a tail, and also of the muscles for moving it; this does not signify that man was once provided with that eloquent appendage, but it does signify that he has received his body from an ancestry some of whom had tails. The tail has vanished, save for the relic, because it became useless.

We were reminded some time ago in a most dramatic manner of the existence of another useless, and worse than useless, relic in our bodies, when on the eve of his coronation our King had to undergo an operation. Now, the vermiform appendix which in the human body, and also, I suppose, in the body of an ourang outang, is nothing more or less than a death trap, is a relic of the "blind tube," which in herbivorous animals plays a very useful and important part in the process of digestion. Some day we may hope that it will evolve itself out of the way altogether.

A full-grown man has only twelve pairs of ribs; his animal ancestors have thirteen or fourteen, and it was conjectured that in the human embryo the full complement of ribs would be found; as a matter of fact, the human embryo has one or two pairs of ribs more than the adult man. Similarly with a bone in the centre of the wrist which the full-grown man has not, but which some of his non-human ancestors have, a remnant of this is also found in the embryonic stages of the development of the human body.

These are but a few of perhaps the most interesting examples; but within the human body there are no less than seventy of these structures, relics of a bygone past. How are you going to explain them? You have either got to acknowledge that they are

the remnants of organs which in the earlier history of the body were useful to its life; that they are the remaining witness to the connection of the human body with an animal ancestry; that during the process of the upbuilding of this wonderful temple of the human life they represent, as Drummond aptly calls them, "the scaffolding left in the body." Either this, or you hold that man was a special creation by God. But on this hypothesis you are confronted with an insuperable obstacle, for you have to explain why the perfect wisdom of God could create, having all possibilities within His grasp, a body for man, the crown and glory of His creation, within which there are no less than seventy parts all of which are useless, some of which are dangerous to human life; a body which from this point of view is "an old curiosity shop, a museum of obsolete anatomies, discarded tools, outgrown and aborted organs."

And if you say that God may have created man "perfect and entire, wanting nothing," and that man has fallen from the image in which he was created, you have still an even more insuperable obstacle to face, namely, how to connect the fact of human sin and disobedience with the possession of a rudimentary tail, or a vermiform appendix.

I believe that no man of intelligence would withhold his assent to the cogency of this argument from facts, were it not for two things: first, that it seems to conflict with scriptural writings, to which I have already replied, and shall further reply, that there is no real conflict; for the purpose of the Bible is not to teach geology or physiology, but to reveal the mutual relation of God and His creation, and with this revelation none of the facts adduced can possibly conflict.

But in the second place, it seems somehow or other that there is an inexpressible and revolting degradation in having a body which is descended from the lower orders of creation. I confess that I do not understand this standpoint. Why a degradation?

Surely the dignity of a man does not lie in the point from whence he starts, but in that point towards which he is ever tending; the worth of a man is not in what he sprung from, but in that to which he has attained; the value of a man is not in what he was to begin with, but in what he is becoming, and what he will be to end with. To judge of a man by the point from which he starts is the basis of all that ugly pride, priggishness, and vulgar snobbery which is such a blot upon the fair countenance of humanity; a man is less worthy of your acquaintance because you are in a profession and he is in a trade, or because he lives in a house of much less rent than yours, or because his parents kept a little shop; and other such arrant impertinence.

What if Carey was a cobbler; and Bunyan a tinker; and Burns a ploughboy; and Jesus a Nazarene. None of us are worthy to unloose the shoe latchet of such men. Their dignity is not in their humble origins, but in what they have become for mankind to-day.

The worth and dignity of humanity is not to be sought in the lowly origins from which this mortal body of ours has risen, but is that ideal towards which we are ever tending, which was with God from the beginning.

So that I do not understand this idea of degradation; I do not see where its reasonableness comes in. It is not a fact that you sprang from a monkey, but

if it were, thank God that you have been able to spring so high.

It is characteristic of lower minds and lesser souls to "scorn the base rungs by which they did ascend." And after all it is ascent more than descent.

I cannot forbear to quote a purple passage from Drummond on this point. He says:

"The descent of man from the animal kingdom is sometimes spoken of as a degradation. It is an unspeakable exaltation. Recall the vast iniquity of that primal cell from which the human embryo first sets forth. Compass the nature of the potentialities stored up in its plastic substance. Watch all the busy processes, the multiplying energies, the mystifying transitions, the inexplicable chemistry of this living laboratory. Observe the variety and intricacy of its metamorphosis, the exquisite gradations of its ascent, the unerring aim with which the one type unfolds—never pausing, never uncertain of its direction, refusing arrest at intermediate forms, passing on to its flawless maturity without waste or effort or fatigue. See the sense of motion at every turn, of purpose and of aspiration. Discover how with identity of process and loyalty to the type, a hair-breadth of deviation is yet secured to each so that no two forms come out the same, but each arises an original creation, with features, characteristics, and individualities of its own. Remember, finally, that even to make the first cell possible, stellar space required to be swept of matter, suns must needs be broken up, and planets cool, the agents of geology labour millenium after millenium at the unfinished earth to prepare a material resting place for the coming guest. Consider all this, and judge if creation could have a sublimer meaning, or the human race possess a more splendid genesis."

Then, you say, after all man was not created perfect. That is so; nothing is created perfect. Think it out for yourselves; all creation is the manifestation of an infinite life; the life, transcendent and eternal, is perfect; perfect because uncreated; the manifestation of it under conditions of space and time, which is what we mean in this connection by creation, must of necessity be imperfect.

You may pick a spring daisy and say that it is a perfect flower; think about that for a minute. This daisy which you call perfect, whence did it come? It, too, has evolved from a long line of forms, and that line has been marked at every step by struggle and death and survival, all of which mean imperfection; so that that which was created was something,—not a perfect daisy; but a "not-yet" daisy which, at the issue of a long process, was to become what you call a perfect daisy. And granted that it is a perfect daisy that has been produced; what is the result? nothing better can be arrived at along that line; it is a *cul de sac*; and so the stream of life has flowed on past the daisy; its perfection of form made it useless to the life of creation, and it is left behind and other and higher forms are produced. The lower in the scale of being an organism is, the sooner can it attain to perfection of form; and as soon as it has done this the onward flowing life of creation seems to take no further interest in it; it may always be what it is, it can never be anything better or higher. But consider even that which you call the perfection of a daisy, it is a perfection of form only; not a perfection of life; for it dies; why? because though perfect as a form, it is not perfect as a means of co-ordinating the life that is in it with the environment; it is perfect in the less important circumstance, and imperfect in the more important. Nothing is created

perfect. With the possibility of perfection, certainly. But that is a different thing; it is the whole difference between the point of view of Genesis interpreted literally, and the point of view of evolution. Things were not formed perfect by special acts of creation; in that case all growth, progress and development, would have been impossible; things were created (which is a somewhat crude way of putting it) imperfect, but with the possibility of perfection latent in them; and the whole process of the development of life from form to form is the gradual realisation through imperfect forms of that inherent potentiality of perfection. When a thing becomes perfect, growth in that direction must cease; and the higher in the scale of being an organism is, the longer will it take to attain its ideal. And herein lies the justification of that fine daring thought of Browning, that God's joy is in the progress of things rather than in their perfection.

"God tastes an infinite joy
In infinite ways,—one everlasting bliss,
From whom all being emanates, all power
Proceeds; in whom is life for evermore,
Yet whom existence in its lowest form
Includes; where dwells enjoyment there is he:
With still a flying point of bliss remote,
A happiness in store afar, a sphere
Of distant glory in full view; thus climbs
Pleasure its heights for ever and for ever.
The centre-fire heaves underneath the earth,
And the earth changes like a human face;
The molten ore bursts up among the rocks,
Winds into the stone's heart, outbranches bright
In hidden mines, spots barren riverbeds,
Crumbles into fine sand where sunbeams bask—
God joys therein. The wroth sea's waves are edged
With foam, white as the bitten lip of hate,
When, in the solitary waste, strange groups
Of young volcanoes come up, Cyclops-like,

Staring together with their eyes on flame—
God tastes a pleasure in their uncouth pride.
Then all is still ; earth is a wintry clod :
But spring-wind, like a dancing psaltress, passes
Over its breast to waken it, rare verdure
Buds tenderly upon rough banks, between
The withered tree-roots and the cracks of frost,
Like a smile striving with a wrinkled face ;
The grass grows bright, the boughs are swoln with blooms
Like crysalids impatient for the air,
The shining dorrs are busy, beetles run
Along the furrows, ants make their ado ;
Above, birds fly in merry flocks, the lark
Soars up and up, shivering for very joy ;
Afar the ocean sleeps ; white fishing-gulls
Flit where the strand is purple with its tribe
Of nested limpets ; savage creatures seek
Their loves in wood and plain—and God renews
His ancient rapture."

And if God joys in the progress of these things as they play their part and die their death, each leaving behind them something which counts in the upward-striving life of creation ; he rejoices more in man's progress towards the heights of knowledge, power, and love. But man's progress necessitates man's imperfection ; and it is clear that had God created man a perfect being from the beginning, then obviously these very things which give humanity its richest meaning, those strivings, aspirations, hopes, ideals, labours, sympathies, would have been impossible.

The catastrophic creation of a perfect humanity would, I believe, be a cosmic impossibility ; but even had this been otherwise, such a humanity would have been without that upward look towards the face of God, without that upward effort towards the heights of God, a humanity of stationary, irresponsible, cheap perfections, in which I find it impossible to see value either for itself or for its creator. Indeed the Adam and Eve of the Bible were not created perfect ; they

had the capacity for disobedience, along with a capacity for obedience, and man, as evolved from the lower orders of creation, has the same.

But how then can it be said that man was created "in the likeness of God's image?" I could say almost as much as I have already said upon this matter, but I will content myself with a paragraph, which, after what I have already said, will be clear enough.

I do not think that these words as they occur in the book of Genesis refer to the physical form of man; I believe that they were used in a full consciousness of the spiritual nature of God; and they refer not to a physical form, but to a spiritual capacity.

That which separates man from the lower orders of creation is the possession of higher capacities of intelligence, and love, and action according to impulses arising from these; and as on the physical side of his nature he bears the image of the earthy, so on the higher, the spiritual, side of his nature he bears the image of the heavenly. But even in these attributes man is as yet imperfect. When I say that man was created in the likeness of God's image, I do not mean that he was created in full possession of the spiritual perfections of God; from the point of view of the man, I mean that he was created with the possibility of such perfections; and from the point of view of God I mean this, that He saw the end in and from the beginning; in the imperfect beginning He saw the ideal end; in the lowest man he saw the highest; in the Adam he saw the Christ. Even while the stone was, for a lower vision, unhewn and unformed, the eye of the Master saw the perfect figure that was to be. And that which man was to be, that which man was becoming from the

first breath, it was that which man was and is, for God.

So that I answer the question from which we started by saying that there is no real alternative, such as the words imply; man has been slowly evolved from the lower orders of creation, but he has also been made in the likeness of God's image; for, from the first, man has been for God that which he is even now becoming, as, "laying aside every weight," he presses "forward towards the mark, to the prize of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Prayer

O God and Father, whose Infinite Power is with us Thy creatures and Thy children, and whose Infinite Love covers us as with wings, help us to set our affections upon the things which are above. Enable us to answer the upward call of that ideal in the likeness of which Thou hast created us,—until, purified through Thy mercy of all the taint of that which is from beneath and perfectly identified with the life which is on high, we shall know Thee as Thou art and see Thee face to face. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

XII

THE FALL OF MAN

"Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?"—ECCL. iii. 21.

Do you believe in the fall of man as related in the Bible?

I BELIEVE in the fall of man; but I do not believe that the narrative contained in the second and third chapters of the book of Genesis can with any reason be regarded as literal history.

The author of these chapters was confronted, as you and I are confronted, with the fact of human sin, and he felt, as we feel, the necessity of explaining the existence of moral evil in the world in such a way as to make it consistent with the government of the world by a pure and holy and righteous God. He gave an explanation as best he could according to the light that he had; we do not accept his explanation in the literal sense in which he may have intended it; but we, with the facts at our disposal, and the illuminating light of reason and moral insight, provide an explanation, different enough in many respects from his; but in all essential points remarkable in similarity.

It is interesting, and a matter of much suggestiveness, to observe that in many lands widely diverse and disconnected from each other, men have sought

to explain the existence of moral evil, and all the disorders connected with it, by postulating a lapse on the part of man from some higher condition. And in the religious literature of the nations which surrounded the Hebrews we find that such explanations contain important parallels with that given in our Bible.

In Assyrian inscriptions, for example, the names of Hiddekel and Euphrates, the names of the third and fourth rivers of Eden in the biblical account, are found in connection with the Assyrian word IDINU, which means a field and is identified with the biblical Eden.

On Assyrian bas-reliefs we find representations of sacred cone-bearing trees, evidently carrying a mythological interpretation.

Many of you may have seen in the British Museum a Babylonian stone cylinder upon which are represented two human figures, with a serpent behind them, stretching forth their hands towards some fruit which is hanging from a tree in front of them.

The serpent figures prominently in the legend of the Chaldean tablets; and the following is given as a translation of a portion of the third Creation tablet:

> "In sin one with the other in compact joins,
> The command was established in the garden of the God,
> The fruit they ate, they broke in two,
> Its stalk they destroyed,
> The sweet juice which injures the body.
> Great is their sin; themselves they exalted."

We are not able as yet to judge with perfect accuracy the exact meaning of these mythological representations and these expressions, but the main fact seems clear enough, that widespread in the large area of Mesopotamia there were legends of

a fall of man which in external features resembled the story as given in the book of Genesis. It is highly improbable that the Hebrew story should have been unconnected with, and uninfluenced by, these prevalent local traditions. But while agreeing in many external points, the narrative in Genesis differs from the legends current in Mesopotamia in two most important matters.

Its comparative simplicity and purity; free from all the grossness and the grotesqueness of the local traditions.

Here, for example, is a translation of the Chaldean account of the victory over the serpent:

"Tiamat" (this is the serpent) "whom he had bound, then turned backward;
So Bel trampled upon the belly of Tiamat,
With his club unslung he smote her brain,
He broke it, and caused her blood to flow;
The North wind bore it away to secret places."

You may contrast with this the words in Genesis, so full of a restrained dignity and a pregnant power. "It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

And there is, further, the higher moral tone and the deeper, purer religious spirit which breathes in the Hebrew account, and which is due to the fact that the fall of man is brought into direct contact with the will and purpose of the One God of All, Creator, King, Father, and Judge.

So that we are led to this conclusion that traditional beliefs concerning the origin of man, and the origin of moral evil, beliefs which in the form of myths and legends had a wide currency among nations which were kindred with the Hebrews, were utilised by the author of the Genesis story, but as they passed through his hands were purified of their

grossness, and illumined by a truer moral insight, and refined by a greater religious sensitiveness, characteristic of the Hebrew Spirit in its later development.

In giving an answer to this question, Do you believe in the Fall of Man as related in the Bible, Dr Horton is reported as having said, "Yes I do. I believe it exactly as it is related in the Bible. It is related in the Bible as an allegory."

And from the times of Philo and Origen this allegorical interpretation of the biblical story of the Fall has been received by many with favour. Thus Philo said that Adam and Eve are not personalities so much as representations or personifications of the two prominent sides of human nature; Adam represents the rational, while Eve represents the sensual, part of man, and the serpent stands for pleasure; and it might be pointed out how true it is to human experience that our earliest and strongest temptations appeal not to our rational faculty, but to our sensuous nature; and it is the sensuous nature of man which after it has itself yielded brings his reason into bondage.

Such interpretations are interesting and suggestive enough, but there are many difficulties in the way of accepting this method as the right way of regarding the narrative.

After all, the simplest way of regarding it is the most satisfactory; that it is a legend which conveys truth in disguise. The author of the story had certain things very clearly in his mind; that the world had been made by God; that there was moral evil in the world, the cause, in his view, of all the disorder and misery and wrong that he saw around him; of this evil and of this disorder, God, as he conceived Him, could not have been the author;

how then was its existence to be explained? That was the problem. He was aware of attempts at explanation which had already been made, made by men of his own type of mind and spirit; these appealed to him to a certain extent; they influenced him as he sought for a satisfactory explanation; he worked along similar lines, though standing at an advantage by reason of the purer conception he had of God's nature; and the results of his thought and speculation (not necessarily his own as an individual, but perhaps of the school to which he belonged) was embodied in this story.

I take it that our task is to discover what exactly is the truth which he embodied so; for whether we believe in an actual Adam and Eve, and a real paradise of Eden, and a real serpent, or no, we must, if we are true to the teaching of experience believe in a fall of man; and what we want to know is exactly what that fall signifies, how it takes place, and what it involves for ourselves and for others.

The biblical story of Creation and the Fall makes clear that there is an important and fundamental difference between mankind and the rest of creation.

In considering a short time ago the place of man in creation we saw that there was a considerable amount of likeness and kinship between man and the lower creation.

Both these statements are true, and it is important to see wherein consists the difference between man and his next of kin beneath him. The Bible says: "And the Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

Modern psychology would probably talk about self-consciousness and the perception of relations.

It is difficult for ordinary people like we are to understand exactly what either the biblical or the scientific expressions mean; but this will be clear, that man is raised above the rest of creation by reason of his possession of a higher mental faculty, which brings with it a higher quality of life. Man knows himself in a way in which animals do not and cannot know themselves; man knows more of himself than an animal can ever know of itself; and this knowledge of self in all its progressive fulness and richness brings man into touch, into communion, with a higher moral and spiritual life; or if we may pass from the terms of psychology to those of theology, brings him into touch and communion with God.

Between you and your dog as it lies before you on the hearth, there are many things in common; many things besides the mere details of the structure of the physical organism; it is conscious as you are conscious; its mind can receive impressions and it can act upon them just as you do; it has the lower mental faculties in common with you; it is quite possible that it may possess a power of reasoning which is quite rudimentary compared with yours, but is, in its fundamental processes, like yours; probable, too, that it may possess a rudimentary conscience, blunt and dim compared with yours, but still a conscience. And yet, in spite of these similarities there are differences which go deeper into the secret heart of life, and place you immeasurably above him. You know yourself, you are conscious of yourself, in a way of which it is not capable; you are capable of a life of thought and action so infinitely more complex than any of which it is capable as to constitute a different quality of life altogether; and in your knowledge

of yourself there comes to you the consciousness of a still higher possibility of life, and with that consciousness the sense also of power to make its possibility actual; you are capable of conceiving ideals; and capable of giving to your life definite direction towards them.

This is to put into somewhat crude scientific expressions the thought which the author of the creation story put into theological conceptions, when he spoke of man as being lord over creation, and capable of personal communion with God, who "walked in the garden in the cool of the evening."

It is a matter upon which it is not possible for me, or indeed for any one as yet, to speak the last word, as to whether this higher faculty, and this higher quality of life, which distinguished the human from the animal, is a special endowment from without, or simply a higher development from within.

I am, myself, so impressed with the majesty, and the highly probable universality, of the law of continuity that I am willing to believe that this higher quality of life which distinguishes the human from the animal was due to an evolutionary process of development. The path by which this was accomplished is a "path which the eye of the vulture hath not yet seen," but I can believe the law to act even when the sequence cannot be traced in detail.

It has already been suggested that animals possess a rudimentary reason and also a rudimentary conscience, but it is very precarious to argue from the actions of animals, because of the impossibility of getting within their mind, as it were, and the impossibility also of avoiding translating their actions according to higher human experience.

The fact, however, is not of essential importance

to our investigation to-night, for whether it was by development from within, or whether by endowment, gift from without, the issue is the same, that man has a higher quality of mind, and a higher quality of feeling, and a higher quality of life than an animal.

To use a New Testament phrase, man has been "quickened from above"; has entered into a higher universe; as the heir of God has received possession of a divine life.

This is the rise of man. The rise apart from which there is no propriety in speaking of a fall.

Where then does the fall of man come in?

The Bible narrative makes this clear to us, that our first parents—and whether the whole human race sprang from a single pair or no, it is obvious that we must have had first parents — our first parents lived among the animals in a state of innocence and purity; they were made conscious of their superiority over the animals; and they were also made conscious that over and above them themselves was a superior Being, whose will constituted for them the higher law of life, and to whom they understood that they owed obedience.

We may take that quite out of the setting of the Garden of Eden, and we shall find that it is true of us; we live our lives in connection with the lower ranges of creation; we are made conscious of our superiority, as human beings, over it; and at the same time we are conscious of a higher life with a higher law, a higher universe with its higher order, to which we feel that we owe obedience.

For that obviously is the nature of the higher life and the higher universe, that it imposes upon us who enter into it a law to which we must render submission.

A man may be conceived of as living, like Robinson Crusoe, quite solitary and alone; in which case himself is his universe; and the law of his life is the law of self.

But when that solitary man surrounds himself with a family, he enters into a wider universe of life; and none of you who are present here and who have families of your own will deny that the universe of the family life is higher than the universe of the mere self-life, and that that higher universe imposes upon you a law, to which, even at cost of sacrificing yourself, you are bound to submit. A father of a family puts his family before himself, not because he is kind and unselfish, nor because he is forced to by any external authority, but because it is the imperative of a higher duty, which he feels bound to obey. It is so also when a man realises himself as part of the community in which he lives; the universe of the communal life or of the national life is a higher universe than that of the self life; and its law is a higher law than that of the self; when a man enters sympathetically and sincerely into the life of the community it is always a process of unselfing; he is no longer a law unto himself; he realises the higher claims of the higher universe; and he progresses according as he sacrifices himself in submission to the higher duty.

And when a man enters into the highest universe of all, the highest life possible to a man, the spiritual life, the universe of God, he feels the compulsion and the constraint of its law; and he finds, in that universe, his truest liberty in submission to the will of God.

And so, when our first parents became conscious that they had left behind, as it were, the universe of the lower orders of creation with its law, and had

entered not merely into the consciousness of God but into the consciousness of God as being their God, that is, when they had entered into a higher universe of life in which they found themselves in communication with the highest, they felt the constraint and the compulsion of the higher universe.

They were still conscious of the law of the beast; but they had become conscious also of the law of God; and they felt that this was a higher law, in the presence of which the law of the beast however strong its appeal had no authority, but their simple and plain duty was obedience to the will of the Highest.

Now, obviously, if our first parents were clearly conscious of these two universes of life, the universe of the beast-life which was below them, and the universe of the God-life into which they had been called, if they were conscious of the law of the beast and of the law of God, and knew the law of God to be a higher law of life, then, if in any particular action, in the doing of which the lower and the higher law came into conflict, they, having the power to choose, chose to identify themselves with the lower universe rather than with the higher, in that act they fell, because they voluntarily placed themselves at a lower level than that at which they might have stood and were meant to stand.

In short, they fell, exactly as you and I fall, when being free to choose between a higher and a lower course of action or career of life we choose the lower instead of the higher.

Is there then any difference between the fall which is a real experience to all of us, and the fall of our first parents? In the essential fact I do not think that there is; in their case and in ours it consists in an act of voluntary disobedience to the higher law.

But there are at least two things to be said.

I have spoken of a clear-cut distinction between the lower and the higher universes; and I should like to make it clear to you that man must have advanced a long way upon his own peculiar line of development as separate from the animals, before any such clear-cut distinction could be possible to him. The account as we receive it in the biblical creation story marks the end of a process and not a beginning. I do not think that our first parents could possibly have had such a clear alternative presented to them, as was presented to Adam and Eve.

I think that man entered into a consciousness of the higher universe by a process of development; that man became aware of God, of the authority of God, and the possibility of communion with Him, very very much later than the time when that new faculty first made its vague and germinal appearance which differentiated the human from the animal. I believe that there must have been long years, yea, ages, before man consciously recognised himself as man. Man was not suddenly transplanted from the lower universe into the higher; he grew into it by slow gradations. Behind the first man, who consciously knew himself as man, there must have been a long line of beings in whom the consciousness of manhood was vague and intermittent: who were essentially different from mere animals, by reason of the possession of a faculty which in the struggle for existence gave them an advantage over animals; but who were not as yet consciously men.

All along this dim and distant line these primitive humans must have oscillated impulsively between the lower and the higher quality of life; living now as mere animals; and now according to the imperfect

suggestions of the higher life that was dawning; without any full consciousness of the difference between the two; without any consciousness that in any deep sense the higher was better than the lower.

And I see no reason why we should not say that this higher area of life became established in creation because, to begin with, it was found that certain advantages accrued from its practice in the struggle for existence. Men chose to act in accordance with the higher law at first because of the utilitarian advantage gained by so acting, not because of any consciousness that the higher had a moral claim upon their obedience. That all came later.

Is it not so with our children; have you watched the development of the life of your child? The development of the life of a child, of both its body and its mind would give us, if it could be traced in detail, the history of the development of the race.

A child is not a fully fledged moral personality all at once; a child's life gradually widens and deepens; that is, a child enters by degrees into the consciousness of the higher areas of life; it awakens gradually to the consciousness of a higher law which it must obey. Only the other day my little boy said to me "Would a gentleman do this?" There was the boy feeling his way as it were into the larger life of manhood, and what the boy learns quickly by instruction; the primitive human had to learn slowly by experience.

I hope that it is clear to you that man did not, and could not from the first have done so, identify himself with the higher universe consciously and definitely because it was higher, and because he recognised the claim, which, as higher, it had upon him for obedience. Adam and Eve, in this sense,

were at the end of a process and not at the beginning.

But I do not think that we can speak of a fall of man until he has arrived at that stage of his development in manhood when he consciously realises that he is the subject of a higher realm, and therefore owes obedience to its law.

Was his fall of necessity? According to the terms in which I have defined his fall, you will see that the answer to this question is, no. I have defined his fall, and the biblical narrative supports me, as being when, conscious of the higher as higher and the lower as lower, and having the power to choose either, he chose the lower voluntarily. If he had power to choose the higher, his choice of the lower, that is, his fall, was not of necessity.

I am not now discussing as to whence came this power to choose the higher; it may have come as the result of the long years of struggle wherein the higher had battled with the lower, and through both victories and defeats had at length established itself in power in the man's life; or it may have come from the fact that there was possible unto him the reception of a communicable moral and spiritual energy from above; or it may have come from both these sources, or these two sources may in point of fact be one; but man could not with any propriety be said to fall, unless he had the power to stand at the higher level.

The whole of the biblical story loses its moral point unless we admit this.

So that I do not pretend to fix the date of man's first fall; nor do I pretend to say that it happened here or there; or that the particular occasion for it was this or that; these things do not really signify. The important thing to bear in mind is this, that at

some point in the development of the life of humanity, man, standing clear and firm in his self-consciousness, saw a lower level to which he might sink, saw too a higher level to which he might rise; felt the constraining power of the higher call, knew that in obedience to that call his life as a man, as distinct from his life as an animal, rested; and in a crisis of choice, when it was possible to him to sink, and when he knew that it was also possible for him to rise, he voluntarily chose to sink, and in an act of disobedience chose to refuse the higher and identify himself with the lower.

There can be no question that a definite crisis of that kind did once present itself to the first self-conscious God-conscious man.

What was the effect of that fall? it was twofold. It affected himself. In that act of self-identification with the lower he became less than a man; and in spite of all his subsequent strivings he could never attain the height of manhood to which he might have risen. The result of his fall was for him a permanent incapacity. He might rise higher after the fall, but always, and of necessity, to a less height than he could have reached had he not fallen.

But not only on himself, there was an inevitable effect upon others. This point will become clearer to you next Sunday evening, I hope, when I shall try and make plain to you the meaning of what is known as the solidarity of humanity. But it can be clear enough now for all our present purpose.

In the biblical story it is not difficult to see that the fall of Eve made it easier for Adam to fall. The man sinned, because the woman had sinned. I do not draw any ulterior conclusions from that fact, but only this, that the effect of the fall of one is sensibly felt upon others; and that is not only true of the

pair in that quiet garden; it is true in the great broad spaces of humanity. We are doubtless weaker for the sins of those who have gone before us; as those who live with us to-day are doubtless weaker for our sins. You may substitute heredity for its predecessor, original sin, with its corollary of essential human depravity; the bottom fact is the same, and it is true that because of the fall of the first man who fell, all those who were with him, and all those who came after him were thereby placed at a disadvantage and under a disability in the great human striving upward, Godward.

When you grasp these two facts, brethren, that the man who has once sinned can never afterwards of himself attain the height he could have reached, had he not sinned; and this fact, that we are of necessity weaker, less capable of the pure holiness of God, by reason of the sins of others; do you not begin to see a reason why, if humanity is to attain that perfect ideal which was with God from before the beginning, God must Himself put forth power to save?

Prayer

Oh Thou in whose image we have been created; our Heavenly Father Who has called us in Christ to be sons; look upon us, Thy weak and erring children, in the infinite compassion of Thy great mercy; and help us, we beseech Thee, in meekness and submission to accept the offer of Thy grace, that at the last we may be found in Thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

XIII

THE SOLIDARITY OF HUMANITY

"No man liveth to himself."—Rom. xiv. 7.

This subject bears a definite relation to the one we were discussing last Sunday evening, and it bears also a definite relation to the question which has yet to come before us as to the redeeming work of Christ.

It is through this fact of the solidarity of humanity that we are able to explain how that the fall of one man communicates an incapacity of some degree to other men, and it is through this fact too, that we are able to understand how Christ can be regarded as representative of humanity, so that in His death and obedience we may be able to participate.

The apostle Paul did not use these longer, and more modern words, but he evidently had a glimpse of the truth of the fact, for it was he who said, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

I think that it will be plain to all of you what "solidarity" means. It is the opposite of insularity. It means that humanity is not an aggregate of individuals, like grains of sand in a vessel, each grain being separate and distinct and impervious to all the rest, but that with bonds subtler and deeper than those of any chemical process, each man is bound to another, and all are bound together into one, as

Paul said to the multitude assembled on the Areopagus, "God made OF ONE every nation for to dwell on the face of the earth"; we are "made of one," is exactly what we mean by the solidarity of humanity. Mankind is not an aggregate but a unity, not a sum of individuals but a system of interdependent spiritual forces, the unit of humanity is not the individual but the group, humanity is essentially collectivistic, not individualistic; we are members one of another. Federation, friendship, brotherhood, are the watchwords of the highest humanity, simply because there lie the ideas which embody the deepest meaning and the essential nature of mankind. When a reformer breaks upon the world and cries out his watchword "Fraternity" that does not mean that he caught this idea from somewhere in the clouds and brought it down to men; it means that he has seen deepest into the eternal real of mankind, and has brought to the surface and to light that which had been hidden in the depths, and made articulate the silent law. "Fraternity" can only be a watchword of a movement in the higher life of mankind because it is a law of its essential nature. Humanity is fraternity; "sirs, ye are brethren."

It is always interesting to me to observe with what clearness and steadiness the Hebrews realised this fact, within limits of course; limits which were perhaps unavoidable to them, although they were artificial. The uppermost idea in the thought and life of a Hebrew was the nation, not the individual. They thought of a "chosen people" not of a chosen individual. Jehovah covenanted with Israel, and only held intercourse with individuals in so far as they represented the nation. Jehovah was Israel's God in a truer sense, from their point of view, than he was the God of any particular Israelite. All acts

of worship were primarily acts of groups, smaller or larger, not acts of individuals. The members of the household of Abraham, for example, worshipped God through Abraham, who approached God and offered sacrifice not as an individual but as the representative of the household. In like manner did the officiating priest represent the people.

There was some vague and ill-defined idea of God as having relations with individual Hebrews, but that individual relation was always regarded as being mediated through the fundamental relation which subsisted between Jehovah and His covenant people, Israel. So also we find that many of the Psalms which in their language appear to be addressed to Jehovah by an individual are really addressed by the nation. The "I" of many of the psalms is the nation, not the individual psalmist:—

> "I was glad when they said unto me,
> Let us go into the house of the Lord."

the "I" there is the nation, not the psalmist.

So again, in their dealing with sin and the sinner, it was the nation and not the individual who was prominent in the mind of the Hebrews. When a man sinned, the whole nation suffered, as for example when Israel suffered defeat at the hands of the men of Ai, by reason of the sin of Achan. And the people stoned Achan to death, he and all his house, and all that he had, because only in this way could the nation be thoroughly cleansed of the sin and saved from the wrath of God which was upon them by reason of the sin of one; and the point of view was that it was the nation which must be clean of sin not the individual. So also do you find in the Old Testament that the ideas of salvation, redemption, and so forth applied primarily to the nation.

I do not suggest that the Hebrews had any idea of the solidarity of humanity, but they had a very vivid and a very persistent idea of the solidarity of the nation; the individual Israelite had, in a very real sense, no rights, no promises, no hopes, no inheritance save as a member of the nation.

It is interesting, too, to observe that this idea was really the counterpart of the monotheism of Israel. They believed in the oneness of the nation, because they believed in the one God. The unity of the nation found its ground in the unity of God. And the modern idea is only an extension of this. God, for us, is not the God of Israel, or the God of England, but "King of kings, Lord of lords," one God of all nations of men; and the fundamental unity of mankind is, as it were, the lower side of the universal Fatherhood of God with whom there is no respect of persons, from whom the whole family on earth is named.

Now, we can realise the same truth in the smaller areas of life. It should not be difficult for any of you to realise what we may call, in order that we may get familiar with the word, the solidarity of the family.

Father, mother, child; you will easily see that there are three individuals there, but that they are not there as three individuals. When you say "father, mother, son" and when you say, "man, woman, boy," you are referring to the same individuals but in the former case, by the use of those names, you signify that there is something there besides the three individuals; what that something additional is, is the idea of the family as a whole. The difference between three chance persons brought together, and the three persons, father, mother, son, is that the latter are all closely knit together, and form a

whole together, within which they are, and apart from which they are not. A father, as a father, has no existence apart from mother and child. We call the words correlatives, they imply each other, but the reason why the words imply each other is because the persons stand in inviolable relations to each other, and are what they are by virtue of their place within the family. And this family, which by reason of these interrelations between the parts is one whole, not a loose aggregate but a solid whole, can act as a whole.

Things may belong to the family without at all belonging to any individual members of it; the head of the house for the time being may have them in custody, but not in his individual capacity, only as representative of the family; but the very fact that the family can thus be adequately represented by an individual suggests that the family is a unity.

Family prayers again mean something more than the prayers of the separate individuals of the family; we may each have our private devotions; but in family worship there are other ideas to the front and other influences at play; it is an act of a different quality altogether.

Now, that is something like what we mean by the solidarity of the family; it is not just a promiscuous group of separate and unattached individuals but all are members one of another, all are knit together by moral and spiritual relationships, all are of one.

You can now broaden the area a little, and you will find that the idea is still true; we may appropriately speak of the solidarity of the Church. Within this Church of ours there are a considerable number of men and women who are members of it; but it is, I think, quite clear that this Church is not simply the algebraic sum of the members of it; there

is something over and above this mere addition of individuals. Wheresoever two or three are gathered together in My name, there—is something over and above the mere gathering. The most familiar expression which we apply as a metaphor to the Church is that it is a body ; and quite clearly a body is not simply an aggregation together of two arms, two legs, a bundle of bones and a bundle of nerves and so forth. The body is itself a unity over and above the mere placing side by side with each other a number of limbs and organs ; between these limbs and organs there are relations of place, of function, of life ; and by these relations the whole body is knit together, and groweth by that which every joint supplieth. And so the Church is something above and beyond the mere congregation of its members ; it is such a real something that it can act in important ways, it has certain functions and powers, it is recognised in law as a corporation. The Church, for example chooses its minister ; you may say that that is done simply by the votes of individual members ; but you must go deeper than that, and enquire how it comes, that such individuals can vote together for such a purpose ; and then you will find that their joint action is possible in such a matter only because they are joined together into one whole by common interests, common aims, common ideals, and common effort.

Now it is this being joined together, not simply by the fact that they meet in one place, or bear a common name, but because of community of purpose, of service, of ideal, it is this which justifies us in regarding the members of a Church as together forming a whole which is something more than the mere addition together of the parts ; and so in speaking of the solidarity of the Church.

And, while we limit ourselves to these narrower

areas, it is not difficult to see what an influence each individual has upon the whole. It is difficult to overestimate the influence of the father or of the mother in a family; because the father is the father there are therefore lines of special influence between him and every other member of the family along which his actions and his character exert their power. If the father should fall into disgrace it is obvious that the whole family suffers; and not merely in its reputation with outsiders—that is the least important thing; the most distressful sufferings are within the family. The family health, the family happiness, the family honour, all suffer by reason of the father's fall; the moral tone of th e familydeteriorates, the moral atmosphere in which the family relationships realise themselves is less pure, the deepest bonds are slackened; the moral and spiritual wealth of the family is impoverished. And what is true of the father is true also in varying degrees of every member of a family. The weakness of one communicates itself as a degree of incapacity to the others. If a brother goes wrong it is easier for the other brothers to go wrong too; it is harder for the sisters to go straight.

The same is true of the Church. Some people say that the minister can make or mar the Church; and some say that the Church can make or mar the minister. I am not concerned to defend either proposition; what is more to my point to-night is that both suggestions are based on the fact that between minister and people, and people and minister, there are channels of communication, lines of influence, so that what either is has its real influence upon what the other is. The whole Church is so bound together by the interlacing and interweaving of such lines of influence, that it is a matter of moment to the Church

as to what the life and character of the most insignificant member may be. In some cases the working out of this law is plainly seen. I have known churches whose influence has been woefully diminished by the unworthiness of a single member, on the other hand I have known churches in which life has been quickened, enthusiasm has been aroused, and great progress in all the things that mean most has been made possible by the faithfulness and the sacrifice of a private member. But the law lies even when the effects cannot be so clearly seen and so palpably recorded; and it is perfectly true that this Church of ours is weaker than it might be by reason of the faithlessness and indifference of any one of its members. A member of this Church who is not loyal to his professions, who is guilty of secret infidelities to Christ, is a source of weakness to the whole fabric, a taint of disease to the whole body; our moral tone is lowered, our spiritual capacity is less because of it. On the other hand, you may only be a humble member of this Church, taking in your modesty a back seat in all our gatherings, you may often be inclined to question whether you have any influence at all, if any of us with our human shortsightedness were to try and point out the really valuable members of this Church, you might be overlooked; and yet it is absolutely true that your quiet faithfulness in the secret of your own heart to Him whose name you bear, your diligent service in a lowly inconspicuous place, your unnoticed ministries, these have an influence upon the tone and character and power and influence and life of this Church, which, indeed, we with our clumsy instruments may not be able to measure or weigh, but which can be weighed and are noted by the God of the Just Balance—the Father who knoweth all things and altogether.

No man liveth unto himself. The Church is a whole, and within that whole every part even to the smallest has its place and adds its quantum to the life of the whole.

I have lingered at some length upon these narrower areas of human life because I have been anxious that you should grasp the meaning and the fact of what I am calling "solidarity." But the same thing applies as you enter upon wider areas, even unto the widest. It is in its widest range that we speak of this truth as the solidarity of humanity; and I mean by that fact just what I mean by the solidarity of the family, or the solidarity of the Church, only carried wider and wider so as to embrace all men everywhere. Humanity is a great complexity. Every part is influenced by every other part, directly or indirectly. All the parts are in a greater or a less degree mutually dependent.

The effects cannot be so easily seen or so easily calculated, but they are there for all that. A bucketful of water taken out of a tub quite obviously alters the level of the water in the tub; but it is quite as true, although we have no means of measuring levels in this case, that a bucketful of water drawn up from the surface of the Atlantic has an influence, not only throughout the length and breadth of that ocean, but has a certain influence upon the whole of the water that covers the surface of the globe. "Not a sparrow falleth, but My Father knoweth," said Christ; and we have thought the fact strange; but it is certain that when a sparrow falls, a commotion is set up in the surrounding air, the influence of which is transmitted beyond clouds, beyond stars, and beyond star-dust. Even so are the threads of the life of humanity so closely intertwined, so delicately interwoven, that the smallest circumstance

sends a tremor pulsing through its whole fabric. No man liveth to himself.

You may find help in understanding this by imagining yourself to be an electric dynamo, from which numerous wires radiate off in all directions and pass out of sight; this pair goes off and lights up a whole house, this set works a telegraphic machine; this lights a street, this provides the motive power for a useful piece of machinery, this gives the initiatory impulse to another mechanism which has similar radiating lines; even so, a whole household may be dependent upon you for light and guidance; persons far away or near at hand may be waiting for the message which your character and life and influence shall give them: you may hold a responsible position in the neighbourhood, a position of authority, so much so that you are a marked man, pointed out to strangers; or a whole organisation, a Literary Society, or a Christian Endeavour Society, or a club, or a Sunday School, may depend on you for inspiration and motive power; or there may be a young man or two, a son perhaps, or a member of your Sunday School class, of your company in the Boys' Brigade, or a member of the congregation, who gets all his initiatory impulses from you; who takes his cue from you; who uses his influence largely under the control of yours. That is something like your position among men, only it is infinitely more complex and more far-reaching than that; I cannot tell you how many lines of influence, how many channels of communication radiate from your centre of influence; nor can I tell you to what uses, what tasks, they lead the power that emanates from you.

Now, when you begin to understand that that is true of you, and not merely of you, but true of everybody rich and poor, high and low, you will begin to

understand something of what I mean when I say that humanity is knit together into one whole; does not consist of a mere aggregate of isolated units, but is a solid unity, welded together, woven together, cohering together by a multitude of subtle forces which act everywhere throughout the length and breadth of mankind.

I have said to you sometimes that an individual has no existence apart from the whole within which he lives; and you may have thought that a hard saying. But you have only to think of it on the lines along which I have been working, to understand that it is true. Try and cut yourself off, in imagination, from all the ties that bind you to others, and see what you have left.

You get up to-morrow morning for your work. Now think. The house you live in, is not your own product; you could not have it for shelter unless some one had built it for you, and he could not have designed it and built it, unless for thousands of years men had been building houses and discovering ideas in that line of work: for every comfort that surrounds you as you dress and as you breakfast, you are dependent upon others; you are able to prepare yourself for your work in quietness and in peace only because the community like a guardian angel watches over you. You may not realise your dependence upon the policeman at the corner of the street, but you are tremendously dependent, if not upon him, upon that for which he stands; for the very possibility of getting up and going to your work in peace and security. You feel as you go to work that you have certain duties to your family, and to those who employ you, or to those whom you employ, and the idea of duty plays a very large part in your life; but the idea of duty is a growth which has only been possible

because men have met together in communities; you owe it to the agelong development of the social organism throughout many generations. You go to your work, and the possibility of doing that work of yours, yes indeed, the very opportunity of working, is provided for you; it would not be possible to you apart from others; a thousand ideas pass through your mind in the course of a day, and not one in a hundred of them would you dream of calling original, they are borrowed from books, from conversation and so forth; and of those ideas which seem to you to be original it is true that you would not be capable, if in any sense you could cut yourself quite off from the past thought of mankind. Even when they are original they are dependent upon the intellectual atmosphere of the age into which you have come as an heir, and which you did not create for yourself. In trouble you are sustained by sympathy; but all sympathy is from without you; you depend on others for it absolutely. Love, faith, hope, sympathy, security, honour, position, reputation, opportunity, all these things are only for you in relation to others. Make yourself in imagination a mere individual cut off from past, present, and future, and you may have left the bare abstraction of mere being; but obviously there is nothing left which gives content and meaning to life. And what is true for you is true for everybody. We are all knit together; we are mutually dependent parts within a great whole.

And there is not lacking to us to-day even a physical fact which, itself part of this truth, is symbolic of the whole. We do not know everything about heredity; concerning its laws there is still much to be learned; and the details of the theory are beyond our concern to-night; but of heredity as a fact there is no question. No man begins life with a clean

sheet; a man's personality is not a *tabula rasa*. A definite and important part of a man's personality is determined for him, handed down to him by his parents. We can, and most of us do, inherit tendencies. In a very real sense we depend for what we are upon our parentage; and our parents also upon their parents; and so the line travels backwards connecting generation with generation. And this physical fact is symbolic of other facts.

This generation depends for what it is to a very large extent upon all the generations that have preceded; it would be impossible for me to think as I am thinking now upon this great question were it not that others have thought in the same direction before me; and the previous thought of previous generations has produced an intellectual atmosphere which is necessary to the production of such thoughts as these in my mind. I am not consciously borrowing these thoughts from any particular person, but I am sure that I should not be able to think so unless I had entered into the inheritance of the thought of past ages.

It is wonderful how little there is of novelty in thought. The ideas which I have been trying to communicate to you during the past months you can find, not perhaps in the same form, but in all their essentials in the writings of Athanasius, for example, nearly 1500 years ago. Some of the thought of each generation as it passes is true, some is false; and both the false and the true are handed on; and the higher light of the next generation reveals the falseness and begins to kill it, and brings the truth towards its proper fruition.

We walk to-day by a certain light of reason, and are guided by certain ideals, and are controlled by certain conceptions of morality and of God; and it

is perfectly certain that these ideas and ideals and conceptions would have been different from what they are, had not the thoughts and ideals of past ages been what they were. We are heirs of all the ages.

Our thought of God depends in a real, indeed, in a very traceable way, upon the thoughts of God which the Hebrews had; the law of Sinai was not destroyed by Christ, but taken up into a wider principle and fulfilled therein. And so one might go on for some time.

But the mention of the word ideals, which always carries with it a reference to the future, suggests another thought which we must not miss; we are not only bound as I have suggested to the ages of the past, but we are also bound by the ages that are yet to come; the links reach forward, as well as backward.

When I lived in Derbyshire, in my father's home, I often went into one of the silk weaving mills that were in the town, and watched the weavers at work, and saw how the pattern gradually appeared as the shuttle flew mysteriously among the threads. And I knew that each time the shuttle flew, the character of the stitch it made depended upon the place of that thread with respect to the portion of the pattern which was already complete, but depended also and equally upon its relation to the portion of the pattern that was not yet completed but was only in the mind of the worker.

Humanity is being woven according to a perfect pattern, brethren, a pattern which in all its fulness exists only in the mind of the Master, but each throw of the shuttle is determined by what is yet to come of the pattern as well as by what is already past.

What the world is to be to-morrow has its influence upon to-day, just as we are realising to-day the influence of what the world was yesterday. We are determined in our thought and our action and our character to-day by what man was in the dim far ages of the past when men were children; we are also determined in our thought and action and character to-day by what man will be when he has ascended to the height and is filled with all the fulness of Christ.

Sometimes I hear the call of the future; it comes to me in the slowly developing life of my little boy; he is determined in temperament and disposition partly by what I am, but I feel myself to be appreciably determined in my life by what he may become. I fix my hopes on him; he shall become that to which I can never reach; and I will live before him that that ideal may become if only a little more possible to him, and to me in him.

So do the future ages speak with their angel voices to us; and bid us live that they may reach to heights that we but dream of; the future constrains us; and what the ages yet unborn shall possess of life and thought and capacity and God reacts upon us to-day.

And so, from those far-off times when man first rose from lower levels into the higher universe where God is known and obeyed and loved, down through all the ages with their deepening life, their multiplying powers, their widening capacities, and their ever higher reach, and on and on, through us, until the heights shall have been scaled, and man, purified of all that is dross and refined in all that is worthy, shall stand within the light of God and see God face to face; through all this mighty process, in all its length and breadth, in all its height and depth, man-

kind is one; knit together by bonds which sometimes have been recognised, which often have been neglected, but which have always held; with a common origin, and a common destiny and a common life; which is but the reflection in the lower waters of that One Spirit Father whose constant and unchanging love broods o'er the deep.

I have said all this that I may conclude with two sentences, the truth of which should now be manifest to you.

This first; that because of this unescapable oneness of humanity, the fall of one man means in a real sense the fall of all; not merely the fall of the first who sinned, but our fall, yours and mine, means a weakened life and a diminished capacity for holiness and for God, on the part of all humanity. For the sin you committed yesterday, you are worse; but not only you, humanity is the worse too; you cannot escape the fact, you may rebel against it, but it is there, that you and I who to-day may be guiltless of any sin, are yet at a disadvantage with respect to the full possession of eternal life, by reason of the sins of others who have spurned God to-day—others, whom we may not know, for whom we may repudiate any responsibility, but with whom we are joined together by bonds which we cannot break or put asunder; we stand and fall together.

And this second fact, which is of supreme importance. That if humanity is thus one, it may be represented in a true and perfect sense by One; and if there be such an One who, in a unique sense, for whatsoever reason, could be the representative of humanity, in whom the whole of humanity might be regarded as being summed up, then the life, the obedience, the death of that Representative man, that unique Son of Man, may become and is in very deed and truth

your life and your obedience and your death. No man liveth unto himself, and no man dieth unto himself; this is true of each of us; it is also true with an infinitely deeper meaning of One whom, as the Eternal Son within the Godhead, we believe to be the Ideal Humanity which is with God from everlasting to everlasting, the Alpha, and the Omega, the first and the last, from Whom are all things, to Whom are all things, and in Whom all things consist.

Prayer

Oh, Father of all men, Our Father, and the Father of Jesus Christ, in Whom we live and move and have our being: quicken, we beseech Thee, in us the sense of our relation to each other, that we may help our brethren and not hinder: above all bring us day by day into the full consciousness of an oneness with Thyself, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

XIV

SIN AND PUNISHMENT

"Be sure your sin will find you out."—NUM. xxxii. 23.

IT has been evident to all of you who have taken a patient interest in the subjects to which we have been addressing ourselves for some Sunday evenings now, that the ground was being prepared for a definite and reasonable statement concerning that which we speak of in ordinary religious language as "salvation" and concerning the place which Christ takes in that process.

There remain several things to be said, and among them one of the most important is the relation between sin and punishment.

Before we enter upon that question, I should like to feel sure in my own mind that you all understand the meaning of the words chosen as text; they are often quoted, but their meaning is not always realised. They occur in the book of Numbers, and perhaps almost unconsciously one's mind calls up the story of Achan told in the early chapters of the book of Joshua; how that in the spoiling of Jericho he did take for himself and hide in his tent certain articles, and this in disobedience to the command of God that nothing of the city should be spared. Then followed the defeat of Israel at the hands of the men of Ai; the resulting consciousness that some sin had been committed against Jehovah;

then a scrutiny, and the lots; and in the gradually narrowing coils Achan was at last taken, confessed his sin, and was put to death.

So the man was found out; and in the light of that story you may be interpreting the words, and saying, "be sure your sin will be found out." And yet everybody knows that that is not true.

I remember a conversation which I had not so very long ago with a young man who had difficulties, and this, among others, was a difficulty with him; he did not think that the words of this text were true, and I told him that they were true to the last letter.

"But," he said, "I know that they are not true; I have sinned many times myself, and my sins have not been found out; I have never been found out." Which was probably quite true. I asked him what he meant by saying that he had never been found out; and he replied honestly,—

"Nobody has ever got to know, and I have never been any the worse."

He was evidently making two mistakes, with only one of which I am immediately concerned; this was when he said or implied that the text means that one's sins will always be found out. The words say nothing of the kind. I am perfectly willing to admit that you may sin many times and nobody may ever know your sin, or the fact that you have sinned; I am perfectly ready to admit that many of you may come here to worship, clad respectably, joining in the service reverently, and yet you may be conscious of sins which you have committed, of which no one else is conscious, happily for them—not even your wife, or your parents, or your lover, or your dearest friend. I admit all this; but the text says nothing about this; it says "Be sure your

sin will find you out." Not SOMEBODY will find you out, but your sin will find you out; not, your sin will be found out, but your sin will find you out. Be sure your sin will find you out;—and that I say is true to the last letter.

There is no fact so deeply enrooted in the nature of man as this, that to sin is to sow dragon's teeth in the furrows of life; and from that sowing the inevitable crop is a multitude of armed men who will hunt out your life to destroy it, and give you no rest until either they or you are destroyed.

If you understand the terms aright, the sequence of sin and punishment is inexorable; your sin WILL find you out.

The Hebrew tense here would also carry the translation "is finding you out"; be sure your sin is finding you out; in permitting a sin you permit the birth of a relentless, pitiless enemy, who from the moment of birth works against your life to bring it to destruction.

We define sin as an act of will in the presence of an alternative between two courses, one of which is lower and the other higher; when the will, acting freely, chooses the lower instead of the higher, either alternative being possible.

Now, from such an act as that certain consequences, which can be analysed and calculated, follow; and these inevitable consequences following upon sin are its punishment.

And because these consequences are inevitable, the words of our text are true; be sure your sin is finding you out.

I feel justified, by what I have learned from conversations with people from time to time, in saying that there is a considerable amount of confusion in the popular mind concerning this matter. Sin

and its punishment are commonly regarded on the analogy of crime and its punishment.

A man commits a crime; he steals something, for example; he is tracked by the emissaries of the law; he is run to earth; brought before the judge, and sentenced to imprisonment; the fact of his guilt is recorded, and if, after liberation from prison, he again commits an offence against the law, the previous bad record against him is likely to augment the punishment he will receive. And we have all known cases where the services of a skilful advocate have secured the acquittal of the accused; cases too in which the punishment has taken the form of a fine, which has been paid for the guilty man by a friend.

Somewhat on these lines does the popular mind think of sin and its punishment.

A man sins in his heart against God, he wilfully chooses a lower when it was possible to him to choose a higher; the sin does not come within the ken of any human eye of justice; but, we say, God records it; and all such sins God records; and, as a judge commits a man to fine or punishment, so God as an external authority punishes the sinner; disease in body or disaster in circumstances; these are sent by God to punish a man for his sin. And if these and other such punishments do not immediately follow, yet the record is kept by a recording angel, and when the sinner dies he is taken before God's judgment seat, the seal is broken, and the black page is read; and the punishment which has been restrained in this life, falls in the life that is to come, and the sinner is sent into torment. He has, however, two chances of escape; he has an Advocate with God, who will plead for him, and by whose pleadings the punishment may be either diminished or

remitted; or the sufferings which Jesus suffered when He died upon the Cross are reckoned to the sinner who names His name; the fine is paid by another; and the man goes free.

I believe that that is a very fair account of much popular thought concerning sin and its punishment; and there is some truth in it; mixed however with much error; and the error must be sifted from the truth.

And this matter is of first importance because so many people view the Atonement which Jesus made as if it were concerned merely with the escape from the necessary punishment of sin. The leading ideas of many people with respect to the work of Christ, are contained in this thought, "Because Christ suffered, I shall escape punishment."

I know many passages in the Bible which speak of the "remission of sins"; I know none which justify us in speaking of the remission of a necessary punishment. I know many passages which speak of God's mercy; I know of some in which that very mercy is regarded as achieving its purposes through punishment for sin. The great theme of the Christian Gospel is salvation from sin; as I conceive that Gospel, it is not part of its good tidings that a man should escape, or be saved from, the punishments for sins that have been committed.

Everywhere, not only in the written revelation, but also in the revelation of God's working which comes through human experience, everywhere sin is connected with punishment; punishment must not be separated from sin; what God hath joined together let not man put asunder. Be sure your sin is finding you out.

A criminal against the law of the community may escape the hand and the eye of that law; but while

a man may escape the legitimate consequences of his crime, no man can escape the necessary consequences of his sin. And the things which follow upon sin are the punishment of sin. Every man must bear the punishment of his sin; it is inevitable that he should bear it; nobody can bear it for him; he may be helped in the bearing of it; others may suffer with him; but the punishment of his sin the sinner must bear. It is true in one of those deep mysteries of which we may get glimpses now and again that Christ bare our sins in His own body on the tree; but that is not at all the same thing as saying that Christ bore the punishment for our sins in such a way as that on account of His sufferings it is not necessary for us to suffer.

The differences between the committal of a crime and the punishment which the community inflicts through its judges and its courts, and the committal of a sin and the punishment which follows, is both great and deep.

A crime is not necessarily the same thing as a sin; it often is, because God is revealing Himself in the progressive life of humanity; and accordingly the laws which govern the community and which are therefore expressions of its life, may also be partial expressions of the nature and the will of God; but in committing a crime a man puts himself over against the community; in committing a sin, the man puts himself over against God. A man may break the law of the community without breaking also the law of God.

There is another difference. A crime may be undetected, and therefore unpunished; all the vigilance and the machinery of the law may be unable to bring a criminal to justice. But even those of us who do not understand how it works out, have an

unerring instinct of the truth that all sin is and must be punished, somehow somewhere and somewhen. Because we have thought that such punishment for sin does not follow in this life we have got into the way of postulating a future hell in which those punishments shall be exacted, measure for measure, and from which none shall come forth until he have paid the last farthing.

I hope to show you before I sit down that that instinct is justified in fact; that no man can escape the consequences of his sin; that though a man may mock at the laws of his community and defy them with impunity for a season, no man can mock God.

> "Though the wheels of God grind slowly,
> Yet they grind exceeding small.
> Though in patience He stands waiting,
> With exactness grinds He all." All.

And there is another difference still which I hope will become clearer as we proceed. The punishments of the community for a crime committed against its laws are inflicted from without. They are symbolised by the hands of the policeman; the isolation of the dock; the verdict of the jury; and the walls and confinement of the cell. But the punishments which are the consequences of sin are not inflicted from without; they follow from within; they are the development in the man's life of the sin itself. That is one reason why they are unescapable; a man cannot get away from himself; there is nowhere in the whole area of a man's being a country like Argentina where a man can rest outside the jurisdiction of the law of his land; wherever a man goes he takes his sin with him, and the development of that sin within his own life is the real punishment for his sin. The punishments of crimes are inflicted; the punishments of sin follow.

We are back again now at our text; be sure your sin will find you out; it is not a somebody external to yourself who is to find you out and punish you; not an external authority sending detectives to track you; it is your sin that is finding you out; relentlessly, pitilessly, inexorably, unescapably.

This is the central thought of my sermon, and you must let it sink into your minds; the punishments of sin are not inflicted really, they follow; the punishment of a crime may not follow, of a sin the punishment always follows. Let me quote to you a passage from Canon Moberly; "It is obvious," he says in his book on "Atonement and Personality," "that in all the lower analogues of punishment with which human experience is familiar, a punishment implies a punisher, exercising with effect the will to punish. But it is well to remember that infliction from without, by another, so far from being an essential element in all thought of punishment, tends more and more completely to fall into the background and to disappear, as having no longer even an accidental place in those deeper realities of punishment which human punishings do but outwardly symbolise. The more we discern their process and character, the more profoundly do we recognise that the punishments of God are what we should call self-acting. There is nothing in them that is arbitrary, imposed, or, in any strict propriety of the word, inflicted. As death is the natural consummation of disease, not as an arbitrary consequence inflicted by one who resented the mortal disease, but as its own inherent and inevitable climax; so what is called the judgment of God upon sin is but the gradual necessary development in the consistent sinner, of what sin inherently is."

Or as it has been also put, in perhaps simpler and

more graphic language, by the apostle James; "then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin; and sin when it is fullgrown bringeth forth death." Sin when it is fullgrown—there is the idea of the development of sin itself in the life—bringeth forth death. Death, regarded as the punishment of sin, is not an infliction upon the sinner by an external angered violated God; it is the natural product of the development of the sin's self within the life.

Let us bring this to the test of experience. I am frequently honoured, as a minister of the gospel of Christ, with the confidences of my fellow-men; and while one uses illustrations drawn from such communicated experiences, one is sure that they apply to the lives of many besides the one who told them. You can fill out the truth of what I am saying doubtless from your own experience.

Sometime ago a man came to see me whose nobler spirit had been awakened by a description which I had given of the ideals of manhood, and a plea which I had pressed upon all who were listening that these ideals should be consciously held before them, and that they should strive after their attainment.

He told me that he realised the beauty and the truth of the ideal; that a great longing had been born within him to reach to it, and to follow its gleam; but that the more he tried, the more was he conscious of an incapacity, which seemed to clog his feet, and fetter him to low things. He wanted to run the race and gain the prize, and he was trying to break himself free from the past, and lay aside every weight; but there seemed to be a weight which he could not lay aside; which clung to him; hampered his feet; tripped him up; baffled him; until he was almost despairing.

I have seen a man's face turn ashen when he has been confronted with his sin; I have seen the beads of perspiration stand upon a death-cold brow, and the knees giving way beneath the man whose sin has been discovered and brought home to him; and we have all known of men who rather than face the courts and the examination and the laying bare of a black chapter in their story, have put an end to their own lives. But in these cases the predominating elements are physical and not moral; and I have missed in them that deep moral anguish, and that soul agony, which I saw in the eyes, and caught in the voice, of the man who was sitting by the fire with me; who passes among his friends as a man of courage, earnestness, sincerity and high character; but who in that hour saw himself as God sees him; who saw the ideal he was intended to reach, who saw the man he was meant to be, who felt the divine thrill of desire to be all that was possible to highest and purest manhood, and yet who felt that he was somehow fettered and weighted and trammelled, and hampered, that, although he could see the height, he was powerless to attain to it, could scarcely move one step towards it.

Brethren, to see the ideal and to be inwardly conscious of the power gradually to attain to it, is the joy of life and the glory of heaven. But it is not possible to look into a darker hell than into the life of a man who sees the ideal as clearly as you see it, and who yet feels that he has lost the capacity to attain to it, even to desire it constantly, between whom and it there is a great gulf fixed.

What is the explanation of this experience? I found as we talked together that my friend had been in past years guilty of consistent sin; not gross sin in our worldly sense; but consistent sin; he had

gradually through the years formed a habit of choosing the lower; he never seemed to be any the worse for it; nobody ever found him out; no; but all the time, in the silence and in the secret, his sin had been finding him out; and now it had found him.

Drummond speaks of sin under this aspect in the following figure. Imagine your nature to be made up of little cells, just as your body is; little tiny parts which have each their place in the great whole. When you commit a sin, you strike dead the life that is in one or more of those cells; and the dead cells do not fall off from you; they remain; they hang on. Thus your sins become, in their consequences, in their stain, part of you. That unkind word you spoke when it might have been a kind word, or at least silence; that unkind thing you did which should have been a charitable action, or a charitable self-restraint; these things as they multiply through life hang about your nobler and more generous character as a dead weight, a body of death, which prevents your nobility and your generosity from having ever again a free course. That selfish thing you do, that impure act or thought or desire, strikes dead a definite portion of your pure, unselfish nature; and again the dead body hangs about you, like the dead prisoner remained fastened to the living prisoner by the chain that had bound them in life. Every day when you sin you are making dead bodies that cling with all their taint and decay to your life; and as you go on in sin, little sins and great sins, it matters not, you become dead, cell by cell, bit by bit. Until your sin is fullgrown; and then it is death. For days and weeks and years you may go on, and may not feel that you are any the worse, but all the time the silent process is going on, the dead cells are increas-

ing in number and weight and power, and then one day when your better nature hears the clarion call from the heights, and rises within you in response, and you look to the hills; you find that you cannot make the response effective; you cannot climb; you cannot soar; you try to rise but you are trammelled; you strive to go, but you are baffled; and when you look you see that a body of death is clinging to you; it is your sin finding you out; and you cry aloud in your anguish and despair, "Who shall deliver me from this body of death"? and there is no voice, neither any that answers.

Nay, if it will save any of you young men in time, I do not shrink from laying bare my own heart. I know that I have some power; I know that I have some capacity for seeing truth; I know that I have some energy capable of being transformed into labour; I know that my character has some influence; but I have mornings of a tantalising illumination, when I see as upon some far-off height the power I might have wielded, the capacity I might have possessed, the energy I might have stored, the character I might have upbuilded, the man I might have been; so high above me now. Would that I had it now; I would have helped you to see the truth so that there should have been no mistaking, no doubt; I would have touched you to the quick and made you spring into the front rank of Christ's soldiers; I would have been a worthy leader of such as you; I would have impressed you deathlessly with the force of my character; all this was possible to me once; even as it may be possible to you to-day; it is not possible to me now; never shall I reach the heights I now but dream of and sigh for. Why? ah, it is this body of death; the accumulated and remaining results of my sin, my faithlessness, my selfishness, through the

years. It is my sin finding me out. It is that punishment of sin which is the development within the life of the sin's self. That my friends should have known of my sin, that were easily to have been borne; the punishment which I might have suffered at the bar of public opinion, that were insignificant to this; this punishment, this alienation from God realised in terms of weaker, lower, unworthier life; this consciousness of the impassable gulf fixed between what I am, and what I could have been; this is the punishment of sin, which cannot be escaped.

You know what your besetting sin is; who of you here is free from a besetting sin? the temptation that you are always having to fight, the sin that sits round you, like an army besieging a city; the sin that besieges with a constant and unwearying vigilance the citadel of your soul; so that you feel that you are never safe, that is, never free from that temptation. What does it signify? It is the result of your past sin, it is the past sin finding you out, and how it finds you out!

You cannot escape it, it is always coming upon you unawares; when you do not actually see or feel it, you somehow know that it is there, waiting, watching an opportunity; go where you will it follows you faithfully; you might use of it the language which one of old used of God, "If I ascend into heaven Thou art there, if I make my bed in the dark places of the earth, behold Thou art there"; when you are busiest at work, it comes, when you are in the bosom of your family it comes; yes, even in the very house of God, it finds you out.

You can no more rid yourself of it than you can of your own body; it is engrained in truth in your body; your devil is your Self; I cannot go back from

that position; it is your own making, the result of habitual sin; the natural development of your sin's self in your life.

Be sure your sin is finding you out.

Do hold this clearly in your mind. Sin is choosing a lower instead of a higher; it is to identify yourself with the lower rather than with the higher; it is to express yourself as satisfied with the more or less absence of God in a situation in which you might have realised the fuller presence of God; in short sin is alienation from the highest, purest, truest, best that you can see and know in life; sin is alienation from God.

The inevitable result of this alienation from God is the punishment of the sin; it may take the form of a diseased body, of dimmed sight, of tottering step, of diminished mental capacity, of slackened moral vigour, of weakened and weakening life; a life incapable of high flight; incapable of steady purpose; incapable of redeeming sacrifice. But whatever form it takes, the effects of this alienation of your life from the life of God are the true punishments of sin.

Are there any of you here who in your hearts are saying, "Oh, if that is all, I do not care. My only fear was that my sin would be found out; the thing of which I was afraid and which held me back from sin was the thought that some day, if not in this life, I should stand before the bar of God, and all my sins should be exposed, and I should be bidden to depart to a place of torment. But if the punishment for sin is only what you call alienation from God and its effects in my life, then I do not seem to care, that would not be any punishment for me."

I believe that there are thousands of Christians in this country who fear more the physical torments of

a hell, than they dread the moral decay and the spiritual death which follows upon the alienation of the life from God, who fear more the punishment than they fear the sin. There may be such among you. My judgment of you is tempered by the thought that it is not all your fault; it is due to the hindrance which a constant preaching of a false theology has had upon the development of a true and pure morality. My appeal is not to you to-night, you are on a lower moral plane, and must be addressed in your season in other language; your sin, too, has its punishments; for those whose moral sensibility is blunted like yours there are lashes and scorpions, and the rod which from old we have been told is the appropriate discipline for a fool's back.

But you are not all so. There are many of you here, both men and women, to whom the free play of your moral nature, and the steady realisation of your noblest self are the things you pray for, strive for, and long to attain; to whom nought is so beautiful as truth, whether in thought or in action, whose highest pride is in a good character, whose deepest and most permanent joy is in the consciousness of the gradual identification of your life with the ideal; whose most fervent desire is to be a strength to those who are weak, a helping hand stretched out to wrestlers in the troubled sea; who long to see truth, and to be able to follow it without faltering; in short, to whom the whole of life at its richest and its fullest means this, that your humanity should be leavened, suffused, illumined, transformed by the divinity which dwells within you, that you should realise yourself in God and God should realise Himself in you.

To you who are living your life on that plane what I say will appeal. Such a life as that cannot

be lived apart from open communication with God; and sin, which is alienation from God, is just that which makes such communication impossible. For you it can bring no greater punishment than an ever-increasing discrepancy between your life and the ideal; an ever diminishing moral capacity, a subtly developing spiritual blindness and decay.

Can you be delivered from sin which punishes you so? Can this quality of life in all its glory be yours?

That is the central question of your life, and you are not true to yourself unless you seek unwearyingly to find whether within the universe of God there is an answer which can give you peace.

Prayer

Lord for thy tender mercies' sake, lay not our sins to our charge: but forgive that is past, and give us grace to amend our sinful lives: to decline from sin, and incline to virtue, that we may walk with a perfect heart before Thee now and evermore. Amen.

XV

"ESCAPING HELL" AND "BEING GOOD"

"By grace are ye saved through faith."—EPH. ii. 8.

Do you believe that only by believing in Christ as the Son of God can any man escape hell; or do you believe that only by faith in Christ can a man be good?

THIS question involves, or pretends to involve, two pairs of alternatives; and we must see clearly to begin with as to how far these alternatives lie.

There is a contrast between "believing in Christ as the Son of God," and "faith in Christ"; and there is the contrast between escaping hell, and being good; I shall say nothing to-night about escaping hell—we have settled that for the time being: "to escape hell" means for you and me to be freed from sin, and to find our lives, alienated now from God by reason of our disobedience, restored unto perfect oneness with Him. "Do you believe that only by believing in Christ as the Son of God can any man be freed from sin and restored to oneness with the Father; or do you believe that only by faith in Christ can a man be good?"

There is a difference, and it is of extreme practical importance to note the difference, between "believing *in* Christ as the Son of God," and in "believing *that* Christ is the Son of God."

"To believe *that* Christ is the Son of God" is to give intellectual assent to a certain doctrine concerning the person of Christ. The person of Christ is unique in the history of mankind; the personal consciousness of Christ, so far as we are able to understand it, is without parallel in the life of humanity. In order to account for Christ certain theories are put forward, one of which is that Christ is the Word become flesh, the Eternal Son incarnate. If the arguments that are brought forward to establish that doctrine appeal to you as satisfactory, then you give your assent to the doctrine; it is an act of rational judgment on your part, who are able to weigh arguments and test the validity of conclusions; you believe that Christ is the Son of God.

In a somewhat similar manner, having carefully studied the arguments propounded in the fifth proposition of the first book of Euclid, you express your assent to the fact that the angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal; with this difference, however, due to a difference in the matter treated of, that while you believe in the latter fact, concerning the property of an isosceles triangle, because it is capable of proof to an absolute demonstration, you believe in the former because, so far as your clearest judgment goes, that Christ is the Son of God is the hypothesis which best explains the Christ of history and the Christ of experience as you know Him.

Now, and I think quite obviously, we may at once say that this intellectual assent to a certain proposition concerning the person of Christ, valuable as it is in many ways, is not the means whereby a man is liberated from his sin and restored to holiness Many of us are incapable of entering intelligently into the arguments that are advanced to support such a doctrine, and are therefore incap-

able of expressing any useful opinion as to their cogency; while, on the other hand, a blind adhesion, an unreasoning, though not an unreasonable, assent to an intellectual position, can never be one of the fundamental and essential elements in your salvation.

You are not to be shut out from the advantages which belong to humanity by reason of the relation in which humanity stands to God in Christ, simply because you cannot intellectually trace the path whereby that relation becomes realised; any more than you are to be shut out from breathing the air, or living in the light, because none of you, and perhaps none of our wisest men, know exactly of what either air or light consists, or how they realise the relations in which they clearly stand to life.

When you say that you believe that God exists, the majority of you cannot mean that you have studied the great historical arguments for the existence of God, the cosmological, the teleological, and the ontological, and are able to pronounce an opinion as to their validity; many of you have never thought the matter out at all; your belief in God, therefore, if it simply meant that you were willing to give your intellectual assent to the proposition that God is, would have very little value for your life. What you mean, however, when you say you believe in God, is this, that you are living and acting day by day on the supposition that God is, taking it for granted that He exists; which is a different thing; and which brings us out of the region of mere intellectual assent, to the region of will and action.

Now it is in this sphere of will and action that the meaning of the contrasted phrase "believing in Christ as the Son of God," is to be found.

To believe *that* Christ is the Son of God, is to give intellectual assent to a proposition; to believe

in Christ as the Son of God, means to take the fact for granted in a practical way, and live and act day by day on the supposition that Christ is the Son of God, taking it for granted that He does bear that relation to God the Father and to you, which the phrase "Son of God" signifies.

When I say that Christ is the Son of God, I mean that He is the Eternal Son existing within the Godhead with the Father and the Spirit from everlasting; I mean that He is the ideal Humanity which was within the bosom of the Father from before the creation of the world; I mean that creation is the incarnation of the life of the eternal Son; so that Christ is the link between God and me; I mean that as the Ideal Humanity, Christ is the suffering Servant who bears the sins of the world, who was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, and by whose stripes we are healed; I mean that His union with humanity is as close and as indissoluble as is His union with God, so that I am able to identify myself with Him, in such a way that His sufferings may have atoning value for my life; and hiding myself in Him, I may find myself in God.

To give your intellectual assent to Christ as the Son of God, means that you should understand the arguments, some of which, I know too well how imperfectly, I have laid before you during this series of addresses, upon which these statements are based.

To believe in Christ as the Son of God does not mean that you should necessarily understand the intellectual arguments; it means that you should, in the practice of your daily life, take the fact for granted, live out your life on the supposition of its being true; trust in the Saviourhood of Christ, and

so identify yourself with Him in His obedience to the Father's will, in His loving sympathy with all men, in His patient suffering for the sins of others, that the life you live becomes in a real sense the life that He is living in you.

To believe that Christ is the Son of God, and to believe in Christ as the Son of God, are therefore by no means the same thing; many people at the present moment are trusting with simplicity in the Saviourhood of Christ, and through the working of the Holy Spirit are realising the Atonement which He makes, in terms of redeemed life; and they are by no means capable of understanding arguments for the doctrine or of knowing whether the premises justify the conclusion.

On the other hand it is only too true that there are many who believe that Christ is the Son of God, who give their assent to the doctrine, who draw nigh unto Him with the lip, but who do not believe *in* Christ as the Son of God, whose heart is far from Him.

The majority of us who are present here are ready to confess with one voice that Christ is the Son of God; many of us have our reasons for believing it as a doctrine, more of us have our reasons for accepting it as a fact, although we cannot understand it as a doctrine, but when we look within our lives and ask ourselves whether we are believers in Christ as the Son of God, daily trusting in His Saviourhood, daily seeking to identify ourselves with Him in His obedience and in His suffering, daily endeavouring to realise His life in ours; how far our practice is from our theory! how laggard is our will behind our reason! how willing we are to acknowledge the light, and yet how slow to walk in the light! and this is still the condemnation, that light is come into

the world, and we have loved darkness more than the light.

Another phrase in the question with which we are dealing is "faith in Christ"; do you believe that only by faith in Christ can a man be good?

There is not much difference, there is none at bottom, between faith in Christ, and believing in Christ as the Son of God, in the sense in which I have defined it.

Perhaps there is a sufficient difference of surface meaning to justify the two phrases; if I were to try and say quite simply what I mean by faith in Christ, as distinct from believing in Christ as the Son of God, I should put it something like this: Faith means trust; and faith in Christ means trusting Christ; Christ said, "I am the Way"; and faith in Christ means trusting Him that when He said that He knew exactly what He was saying, and that He meant it, and so, in simple trust, following after Him, treading in His footsteps:—

> "Jesus still lead on;
> Till our rest is won;
> And although the way be cheerless
> We will follow, calm and fearless;
> Till we safely stand,
> In our Fatherland."

That is the voice of faith, in the sense in which I am now using the word.

Christ said, "I am the Truth"; and faith in Christ means trusting Him implicitly as a Teacher; sitting humbly at His feet and learning of Him, the meek and lowly in heart.

Christ said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one

shall pluck them out of My hand"; and faith in Christ means trusting Him in this as in all else; believing steadily and calmly, that if we will only follow His leadership, if we will only rely upon His shepherding care, we shall never perish, but shall stand with Him in the dawning light of the Eternal Day.

To have faith in Christ is to trust Him; trust Him as a soldier trusts his captain, following Him whithersoever He goes; trust Him as a pupil trusts his master, owning His higher wisdom, and content to walk in His shadow because He stands in the higher light; trust Him as the traveller trusts his guide who, either by knowledge or by instinct, finds out the way up the great mountains, and over the great wildernesses of unfathomed snow.

"Trusting"—in the words of a hymn which I often sang as a lad, and the meaning of which for my life, neither years, nor knowledge have taken away:—

> "Trusting as the moments fly;
> Trusting as the days go by;
> Trusting in whate'er befall;
> Trusting Jesus, that is all."

But I think that most of you will agree with me that this simple trust in Christ depends at bottom upon the fact that we believe that Christ was what He Himself said He was, "one with the Father." "Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me." The soldier trusts his captain, because he believes that his captain has been commissioned by the king; the pupil trusts his master, because he believes that the master speaks with authority; and we trust Christ, at bottom, because we believe Him to be the Son of God.

So that with respect to this part of our subject I

would say that to believe that Christ is the Son of God is of great and vital importance; but if it merely signifies intellectual assent to a doctrine it is not essential to salvation.

On the other hand, to believe in Christ as the Son of God, and to have faith in Christ, mean practically the same thing; they have a meaning for thought, and a meaning for feeling; but deepest of all a meaning for the practice of life; they mean that the mind that was in Christ should also be in us; that we should be filled with His spirit; they mean that we should so identify ourselves with Him that we may truly be said to die with Him unto sin that we may live with Him unto righteousness; they mean that we should believe, and should live out each day as if we believed it, that just to the extent that we identify ourselves with Christ, the sacrifice which He offered once for all has atoning value for us and is realised by us in terms of reconciliation and forgiveness.

To believe in Christ, in this sense, to have this faith in Christ, is essential to our salvation.

But you press upon me with the second part of the question; is it then only by faith in Christ that a man can be good?

I have not said so. I am quite prepared to admit that there are thousands of people who are good, and who have no faith in Christ in the sense in which I have interpreted that expression. I am quite prepared to admit that multitudes of Buddhists, for example, are good men; and we know that Buddhists have not merely no faith in Christ, they have no belief in God. I am quite prepared to admit that there may be many many men who regard Jesus as a very beautiful and a very pathetic figure in history, who are quite willing to admit the influence which He has

had on the life of mankind, but who have no faith in Him as you and I have, and yet who, tried by the highest human standard, are good men.

They have kept the commandments from their youth; they are diligent in their business; honest in their dealings; they reverence order; they love beauty; they are kind and sympathetic and generous; their lives manifest a sincere and a fervent self-sacrifice; they take their place and play their part in all movements which have for their end the uplifting of mankind, and the enthronement of love. I would gladly give to all these a proud place in the life of mankind; they are among the mighties; but they have not attained to the first three.

What then do they lack? they lack just that personal experience which Jesus said was essential before a man could see the kingdom of God; they need to be born from above. There is a higher universe of life possible to man than that wherein goodness, merely as goodness, is the ideal.

I want to be quite clear about this matter for it is very important. I find it impossible to separate between any human goodness, and Christ. Dr Horton says, "I do not know any good man who has rejected Christ whom I should venture to take as an example if I wished to appear in the presence of holy God." But although I know many a good man who does not believe *about* Christ, and who does not believe *in* Christ, as I do, I cannot bring myself to speak of a good man who has rejected Christ. He may reject a doctrine about Christ's person; he may not recognise in Christ's work of redemption any efficacy for his own life; he may not recognise it, I say, he may not be conscious of it; but I do not think that on that account I should be justified in speaking of him as having rejected Christ. I

think that the safest plan is to allow Christ Himself to teach us on this matter.

When the disciples came to Him and complained concerning some man who had been casting out devils, and yet who did not follow with them, Jesus said, "Forbid him not, for he that is not against you is with you." I never want to get away from that.

Every good action that any man does affirms Christ. I have defined Christ from one point of view as ideal humanity, and the Scriptures teach us that Christ has never been absent from humanity, even though men have not known Him. Wherever and whenever the Ideal humanity has spoken in the history of mankind, it has been Christ speaking. The ideal may have been imperfectly comprehended, and its expression has always been imperfect. But whereever it has been, and wherever it has acted, whether in joyful triumph or in suffering, Christ has been there. Fully and perfectly there, all the imperfection has attached to the instrument and to the conditions.

Now, I care not who the man may be, I care not what his intellectual convictions, I care not to what he himself attributes the power, whenever a man does a good action, to the extent that it is good, and in the degree that it is good, it is the ideal man, embodied more or less perfectly in the doer, which provides the impulse and the power for that action, it is the Christ in the man who is the source of the deed.

There may be a man in this congregation who has no faith in the Christ as I have, who does not trust in His Saviourhood, who may not be conscious of any active relationship with Christ in his life, and yet whose life is by no means empty of good deeds. I want to say to you that if you will reflect upon it,

the power in which you do that deed is the power of the ideal man. In that deed of goodness the ideal manhood, so far, realises itself in you. And when you rejoice, as you have a perfect right to rejoice, in the identification of yourself in that act, with the ideal, your heart burns within you, as the heart burned within the disciples on the way to Emmaus, because of the unknown companion who is with you. That companion is Christ.

The sacrifices of your good deeds you lay upon the altar of the ideal manhood, and it is a sacrifice of sweet savour unto God. There is a high impulse within you which prompts you to "deeds of pure self-sacrifice and the sweet tasks of love," and in that high impulse you rejoice, you strive up to the level of your strength to devote yourself to it. But your altar is inscribed "To an unknown God," and Him in whom you rejoice, to whom you are unwittingly devoting yourself, Him I declare unto you; it is the Christ of all the ages; it is the incarnate Son of God; it is the Christ of Nazareth and Calvary.

You may reject the doctrines that the human understanding has built up whereby we strive to explain the person and the work of Christ. But in every good act you are affirming Christ. Christ who is everywhere the "flower of man," as He is also the "flower of God."

So that while I admit that apart from faith in Christ, in the special sense, a man may be good, I say that a man cannot be good apart from Christ. All the goodness that is in a man, and all the goodness that is in humanity, is due to the activity of the incarnate ideal. We bear witness of the light, He is the true light that lighteth every man coming into the world.

Well then, you say, supposing that we admit this,

is there need of anything further? I submit to you that there is a need of something further before you attain to the highest. And I will try and put it to you briefly.

There is a higher than goodness, as goodness. We may admit that goodness is the highest quality of life which is possible to a man with respect to society, with respect to mankind; a life of perfect goodness would fulfil perfectly the relationship in which a man stands to his fellows. But man is capable of a higher relationship, in fact his relationship with his fellows only comes to its perfection under the influence and the power of the higher relationship. Man is capable of a pure personal relationship to God, and for the perfect realisation of that relationship goodness, as such, is not sufficient. We must be holy, even as He is holy.

> "Eternal light, eternal light,
> How pure the soul must be,
> When placed within Thy searching sight
> It shrinks not, but with calm delight
> Can live and look on Thee."

The pure in heart shall see God.

Brethren, how are we to become holy? Can our goodness, our accumulated goodness make us holy? No. The relation between good and evil is not that between one side of an equation and the other, wherein quantities may cancel each other. If you do an evil deed to-day, and a good deed to-morrow, the good deed does not cancel the evil deed. The evil remains, its stain remains, its guilt remains; and for all our goodness, we cannot of ourselves become holy; and apart from holiness we cannot see God.

We are here at the heart of a mystery, in the

presence of which we take off the shoes from off our feet. The religion which alone of all the revelations of God to men has taught us that holiness must be the garment of those who stand before God, has also taught us how we may attain to it.

Long years before He was born in Bethlehem who was called Jesus because He should save the people from their sins, the yearning of the human heart for that holiness which no sacrifices could give, and to which no human striving could attain, uttered its age-long cry, "Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin; create within me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me, purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." That was the cry, and long years after Christ had lived and died and rose again the answer to that cry came, as from the central brightness of an open heaven, when "ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, cried with a great voice saying, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, who hath redeemed us to God.'"

I believe that apart from faith in Christ a man may be good; but I do not know how, apart from a simple faith in Him who was obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross, apart from a simple faith that, if we only *will*, God is ready to see us, not as we are in ourselves weak, frail, imperfect, but as we are in Christ, purified, sanctified, glorified; I do not know how a man may attain to holiness and stand justified before the presence of God.

Prayer

Oh, Heavenly Father, who pitieth the frailties of Thy children, lead us, we beseech Thee, through the

imperfections of our wisdom, to the fulness of the knowledge of Thy truth; make the foolishness of our words to praise Thee, and by Thine Own Indwelling help us to live better than we know. Through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

XVI

CHRIST AS SAVIOUR

"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son—that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Jn 3[16]

Do you believe that Christ died to save men from sin, or that He died to save men from Hell?

If we were commencing our subject *de novo* it would be necessary to spend a considerable time this evening in defining the terms of this important question. But I shall take it for granted that you remember sufficient of what I have previously said to enable me to say straightaway that the alternative suggested in the question, between Hell and Sin, does not lie.

At bottom the two words mean the same thing; sin consists in the voluntary choice of the lower of two alternative courses of action, instead of the higher; sin, therefore, is the voluntary identification of the self with a life in which there is less of God than there might be; at bottom therefore sin is alienation from God.

And I do not know that it would be possible to choose better words to define the essence of the meaning—even in its cruder forms—of the word "hell," than to say that it is a condition of life lived in alienation from God.

But perhaps in the minds of most of you the alternative suggested by the question means this, "Does Christ save us from sin, or does He save us from the punishment due on account of sin?" That is, you distinguish in your minds between sin as an act or a career of life, and hell as the punishment which, under the moral order of the universe, follows from such an act or career. Sin you regard as the cause, and hell as the effect.

But here again, so soon as you understand the relation which lies between sin and punishment, you will see that while this distinction may be convenient, it has no real existence. You do not require to be much of a philosopher to know that there is no real difference between cause and effect, that cause and effect are but two aspects of one and the same fact. So that while it may be convenient to distinguish in your minds between sin and hell; between the act and the punishment which follows upon it, that distinction is purely conventional; at bottom the sin and its punishment are one; or as I have already put it to you, the punishment of sin is simply the development of the sin's self within the life.

I think that you will find it best to approach this question of salvation from your Self, your own personality, as a starting-point.

You are an individual, and the life which you are living is the life of an individual, and is therefore one life. There is not a life of your body, and a life of your soul, as if your soul were another individual, with its own life, attached to your body. All your life, in all its ranges, in all its activities, is the life of you; it is you, living.

Now, this life of you consists in certain relationships and their realisation. Let us put it somewhat

crudely and say that you enter into certain relationships with the physical universe, by means of your physical organism, the body; and you speak of that life as the life of your body; it would be truer and better to speak of it as that portion of the life of You which is mediated through the channel of the body. You also enter into certain relationships with the universe of thought and ideal; and you speak of that as your intellectual life, or the life of your mind; it would be better to speak of it as being that portion of the life of you which is mediated through the channel of the mind. And you enter into certain relationships with a universe which is higher than physical, higher than intellectual, and which for want of a better term we will distinguish by calling the universe of spirit; and this life of yours in these highest relationships, this life of spiritual activities, you speak of as the life of your soul.

But so long as you speak of the "life of the body," and the "life of the soul," you get into the way of regarding your body and your soul as separate entities with distinct lives of their own; which is only a refined form of the primitive superstition which regarded the soul as a little man within the body which was the big man; it is not so; there is not a distinct life of the body, and a distinct life of the soul: there is only one life, the life of You, entering into, and realising itself in, various relationships.

So that when I speak of my soul I simply mean my life in its highest relationships; in communion with the spirit universe; in fellowship with God.

Obviously therefore, if my life, the life of me, is one, I cannot regard my body-life as one watertight compartment, and my soul-life as another water-

tight compartment, having absolutely no connection with each other; the completeness and the vigour with which the lower relationships, the relationships with the physical universe through the body are realised, will not be without its effect upon my higher life—my life in its higher relationships; and on the other hand, the imperfection and unhealthiness of my life in its higher relationships cannot be without its effect upon my life in its lower relationships.

Now, clearly, if sin is alienation from God, it signifies just this imperfection and unhealthiness of my life in its higher relationships, and therefore the development of the sin within the life, that is the punishment of sin, may not unreasonably be expected to display at any rate part of its effects in the lower ranges of life.

That is to say, it is not unreasonable to regard physical pain and disease and incapacity; mental blindness, perplexity and incapacity; moral obtuseness and anguish and incapacity—these for the individual; and for the community, social disease and disorder; it is not unreasonable to regard these as being in part at any rate the direct effects of sin, of alienation from God, of the wrongness of life in its highest relationships; and so, as being at any rate the remoter elements in the inevitable punishment of sin.

But their root cause is the alienation of the life from God. And it is at that point that any saving agency must work.

It is from alienation from God, that is from sin, that we must be saved.

Hence, if you interpret the question which is before us as meaning "Does Christ save us from sin, or from the punishment of sin?" the answer must be, it is from sin that Christ saves us.

I should like to pass for a moment away from the main stream of our thought to-night in order, at the risk of some repetition of what was said last Sunday, to emphasise with the greatest clearness I can, that punishment must follow upon sin with inevitable and inexorable necessity. Punishment for sin is not dependent as it were upon the caprice of God, in such a way that it may or may not follow. All human analogies of crime and its punishment here break down; a criminal may escape punishment through the skill of his advocate, or the fine may be paid for him by another; but the punishments of sin are not by any means so: they cannot by any chance whatsoever be escaped. We are all of us certain that the sun will rise to-morrow morning; but our confidence in that event rests upon a tremendously high probability which can be calculated by the laws of chance and definitely expressed in figures; our certainty that punishment will follow upon sin is more than a tremendously high probability; I am more certain that punishment will follow sin than I am that the sun will rise to-morrow.

Sin, punishment; sin, punishment; with the inexorable precision, and the unescapable necessity, of an inviolable law, which is as immovable as the Throne of God.

Some of you think that you can sin to-day, and to-night pray for forgiveness, and the punishment will not follow; it will follow; if you are sincere, forgiveness will be yours, but still the punishment will follow.

Some of you think, and there is a certain element of meanness and unmanliness in the thought, that you can go on sinning all through your life, and on your deathbed, at the eleventh hour, you can

name the Ineffable Name of Christ and escape Hell. It is not so.

If your repentance is sincere, if you are actuated not by a cowardly desire to escape suffering, but by a passionate longing for a changed nature, then you will go to a place of restorative punishment, but to a place of punishment you will go.

If you have thought that the Gospel of Christ is a Gospel, the good tidings of escape from punishment for sin, you have been tremendously mistaken. It is a Gospel of deliverance from sin; not of deliverance from punishment; for it is through the suffering of the penalty that deliverance becomes possible to you. And what Christ does for those who believe in Him is this, He makes possible to them such an attitude towards the punishment of sin that that punishment is taken up into the life as penitence and so ministers to a change of nature; and the punishment is no longer merely regarded as the means whereby the wrath of God avenges the violated law of Righteousness; but rather as the means whereby the love of God makes possible to the penitent that change of heart on the ground of which alone can the Father receive him to His bosom.

Sin, therefore, in developing as punishment, is a poison which produces its own antidote; and as we stand by the side of Christ we are enabled to look upon the punishment not as the vindictive retribution exacted by a violated Majesty, rather to accept it willingly as the restorative discipline provided by a yearning love.

And as the antidote ceases to act when the poison has been ejected from the system, so the punishment ends when the sin has no longer any place in your life: when the life, which in the sin was alienated

from God, has again become identified with Him, at one with Him. There is therefore a very real sense in which we may say that we are not saved from punishment, but that we are saved through punishment. And if punishment is the antidote of sin, it is clear that Christ does not save us from punishment; rather is it true that He saves us in punishment.

But, and we are now back again into the main line of our thought to-night, it is essential that we should clearly understand what we mean by being saved.

Those of you who follow our New Testament readings in your Greek Testament will know well that the word which is translated "saved," and the word which is translated "made whole" are one and the same.

When to the woman, in Simon's house, who wetted His feet with her tears and dried them with the hair of her head, Jesus said, "Thy faith has saved thee"; and when to the woman with an issue of blood, twelve years, who came and touched the hem of His garment, Jesus said, "Thy faith hath made thee whole"; He used the self-same word. So that the word "save" means to make whole, and there is a close analogy between being made whole physically, and being saved spiritually.

Now, I may be wrong but I persistently refuse to give to the term "being saved" any esoteric interpretation; any mysterious interpretation; any meaning that can only be understood by initiated persons; I refuse to make any mystery about it; Jesus used this expression to simple people, used it often; for them, and for us, the simple meaning must be the true meaning. If in the presence of the same disciples Jesus spake of a woman being saved by faith, and of a woman being made whole by faith,

and in each case used identically the same word, a word moreover of common use and immediately understood, I think that we may take it for granted that the true meaning of the word in its higher signification is to be found along parallel lines with its meaning in the ordinary signification.

Now, what does it signify "to be made whole"? It means to be restored to health; which is almost a truism, for the word "whole" and the word "health" are of the same root. But what does health signify? Will you connect this up with what I said a few moments ago about your life. I said then that a portion of your life, which we speak of as the life of the body, consisted in the realisation of certain relationships with the physical universe which is round about us. Now, whenever the relationships in which you stand through your body to the physical universe are realised freely, without impediment, normally, we say that the life of your body is healthy. And that is what we mean by health; we mean the free, natural, normal realisation of the relationships between the organism and its environment. A healthy body is a body in normal relationships with the universe of physical life.

When a body becomes unhealthy something is wrong with those normal relationships; they are not being realised freely; they are not being realised at all; something is a strain, something is awry; the channels of communication are blocked or broken. And the physician who restores health is he who reopens these communications, brings again freedom of function where there had been strain; in short, makes the life that is in the body at one—I want you to mark the phrase—makes the life that is in the body at one with the circumambient life of the physical world.

And when I speak of being saved I mean just that, only carried up to the higher relationships of life. To be saved is to be brought into a condition of spiritual health. And I define spiritual health exactly as I have defined physical health; spiritual health is a state of life in its higher relationships when those relationships are realised freely, naturally, without impediment or restraint, normally.

Those highest relationships are relationships of me with the spirit universe; with God. It is just sin which interferes with the free realisation of those relationships, for sin has been defined as alienation from God; sin blocks or breaks the channels of communication; it destroys the correspondence between the soul and God; sin introduces estrangement where there should be free interchange of filial and paternal love; sin puts my life out of joint with God; things are not right between me and God; and He is the great Physician who restores me to spiritual health; who reopens channels of communication which have become impeded; who brings my life back again, as it were, into correspondence with its spiritual environment, the universal life of God; who, where there has been estrangement, works reconciliation; who, in short, makes my life, alienated by reason of sin from the sources upon which it is dependent, at one again with God.

The great Physician is He who makes atonement.

Now you see that I am defining atonement in terms of personal experience; I am not defining it in terms of the Old Testament sacrifices, neither in the terms of scholastic theology. I may be wrong in taking this point of view, but it is here that I find my feet upon rock.

I know—this is the dogmatism of personal experience—I know that as my body-life is dependent

upon the fathomless resources of the physical life of the universe, so my soul-life is dependent upon the inexhaustible supplies of life that are in God; I know, and you know it too, that when I sin, I become alienated from God, cut off from the supplies that are in Him; I cannot pray; I take no delight in, and I derive no benefit from, worship; the means of grace cease to have efficacy for me; no grace is communicated for the communications are broken; my faith weakens; my love grows cold; and I know too that this weakness of life in its highest relationships is communicated as an incapacity to the whole of my life in its lower relationships; my moral sense is blunted; the voice of conscience is muffled, or silenced; I am not responsive to duty; and so forth. And I also know that when by an effort of will (concerning which this is as remarkable as it is true, that as soon as I purposively move to make it, I find that I have the power to make it) when by an effort of will I pass over from the side of my sin and identify myself with Christ, not merely the historical Christ, but the Christ who dwells within me by His spirit, identify myself so utterly with Him that His life becomes mine, and His sufferings become mine—then I find that alienation yields to reconciliation, the sense of estrangement to the sense of restoration and oneness; I find that my very sufferings, the punishment for my sin, are made to minister to my effort after righteousness; I find that my life begins to flow with God, is taken up again into God.

That is what I mean, in terms of personal experience, by atonement, that is what I mean by being saved from sin; it is a restoration of my life into free, full, normal relationship with God. Salvation is spiritual health.

Now at the centre of that experience there is a

mystery which we cannot pretend to solve completely. But I think that it is possible to explicate it sufficiently to display its reasonableness.

Let us be quite clear as to where we have got to. Sin in me is the alienation of my life from God, it is a disturbance of those free, natural, normal relationships between me and God in the realisation of which my life in the highest consists, and on which it depends. Salvation is spiritual health; it is a restoration of a broken correspondence; it is a bringing together again, the making at one of my soul-life and God.

I do not say that the full and fruitful realisation of this restoration is possible all at once; it is a process, but the process must have a starting-point, and that starting-point is when, by an act of will, I pass over from the side of sin and identify myself with righteousness.

That is easily said; but the all-important point is as to how that act becomes efficacious for atonement to us; we say that it becomes efficacious to us in Christ, that Christ's full and perfect sacrifice of obedience makes it efficacious to us; and that is the point which I want to explain to you as clearly as I can, consistently with the elusive mystery which is involved.

Let us clear the ground a little by answering the question "Can a man save himself?" "Can a man, simply by his own act as a man, restore himself to oneness with God?"

The answer to this question must be "no," and the reason is here. The sin of a man means something from the side of a man, but it also means something from the side of God. We have spoken of sin as alienation from the life of God; but that must mean something for God as well as something for the man. God cannot be unaffected by the alienation of a life

which was created that He might realise Himself in it. And it is not simply that the heart of a father has been wounded by the waywardness of the child; it is that the law of righteousness through which God upholds the universe that He has made, has been violated by the disobedience of the creature. From the point of view of the man sin is alienation, from the point of view of God it is disobedience, rebellion, and violation. Now, obviously, this cannot be done with impunity, adequate satisfaction must be made; not satisfaction to the insulted majesty of God, as if it were simply an infringement of His personal rights, but satisfaction to the violated law of righteousness apart from the unsullied dignity of which the whole moral order falls to chaos. The law of righteousness must be vindicated, and at the same time the heart of the Father must have its infinite love satisfied in the restoration of the wanderer; that is the problem.

Well, can the sinner of himself and by himself offer an adequate satisfaction to the law of righteousness? His true penitence may make glad the Father's heart, and love may be satisfied; but eternal justice must be satisfied too; indeed, perfect love could never be satisfied by any contrition however deep, apart from the satisfaction also of perfect justice. Can the sinner himself offer this satisfaction? I submit to you that he cannot; and that the instinct of the Hebrews was right, that the sacrifice must be of a victim without blemish.

And if it were possible to think that a sinner could offer of himself an adequate satisfaction, it will, I think, be clear to you after what has previously been said about the solidarity of humanity, that he is not free so to do, because he is inexorably bound to the rest of mankind by cords that he can neither repudiate nor break; and is by reason of this at a dis-

advantage and under an incapacity, to reach even to the heights that would be possible to him were he free. And even if he could do this, the satisfaction would only be for himself and not for humanity. And apart from the possible salvation of humanity, the possible salvation of the individual, who is essentially bound up with humanity, cannot be.

So that man cannot save himself, man cannot restore himself to full and perfect relationship with God; man cannot offer satisfaction to the violated law of righteousness.

And yet the infinite love of God demands that the child should be restored to His bosom; the Father cannot acquiesce in the loss of the child; and at the same time the infinite majesty and justice of the law of righteousness, which is also God, demands that satisfaction should be made.

Man cannot make it; and it must be made; who then? Obviously God Himself. And yet although only God is sufficient for these things, it is clear that any return to God must be of the man's own free will; and any satisfaction that must be offered for man's sin must be really offered by man. God cannot restore a man against his will; and God cannot offer a satisfaction which is not really man's.

Now, it is here that we come back to that conception of Christ which has been the golden thread binding into one this series of addresses. Christ, the Eternal Son within the Godhead; one with the Father; Christ the Ideal Humanity which was with the Father from before the beginnings; Christ, the human side of God's nature; apart from the existence of which before creation, creation would have been impossible; the Eternal Son, that area of the life of God the incarnation of which under conditions of time and space is creation; Christ, the divine

immanent spirit who indwells creation, Christ the immanent God, one with the transcendent Father. The whole must be interpreted by the Highest, and the meaning of creation is humanity, and the meaning of humanity is Christ; Christ the ideal humanity which has never been absent from mankind even at its lowest; but like a pure strain has ever flowed through the welded lives of men, has been the impulse of all their highest thoughts and their noblest actions, the energy in which the progress of civilisation, as man has reached upwards towards the heights, has been possible, and which once in time blossomed to its perfect flower in Him who walked on the sunny slopes of the fair green hills of Galilee, which circled quiet Nazareth.

Here is One, brethren, whose perfect obedience through humiliation, through suffering, an obedience unto death, even the death of the Cross, here is One whose obedience, as perfect in its spontaneity as in its endurance of all things, is an adequate satisfaction to the violated law of righteousness. Here is a satisfaction which, since it is offered by the ideal humanity, with which mankind is progressively identifying itself, is in a very real sense offered by mankind. Here is a sacrifice which has atoning value for me, and for the whole world, and may be realised by us in terms of restored life; because it is offered by one who shares in our nature, and who, as ideal humanity, is our representative, with whom therefore we are able to identify ourselves in such a way as that His act will be ours.

You do not quite see how this works out. I will show you how it works out.

There is a phrase used by St John when in an hour of clear spiritual illumination he entered into the meaning of the spiritual order of the world. He

speaks of the "Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world." What does that signify? When a man sins, and realises his sin; and grieves over it, and suffers on account of it; who is it that feels and endures the pang of suffering?

Let us suppose Adam, for convenience. When Adam sinned, he was driven forth from the garden, signifying that alienation from God which, from the man's side, sin means. When Adam realised his sin, grieved over it, felt the shame of it, suffered for it; where did the burden of the suffering lie? Who suffered? The one who suffered was the ideal Adam, Adam as he saw himself in imagination at his highest; it was the ideal man in Adam that suffered; the ideal man that existed in him in germ, imperfectly expressed in all his purest thoughts, holiest desires, divinest aspirations. Brethren, it was the Lamb suffering from the foundation of the world. And according as Adam identified himself with the germinal ideal within him, and accepted the suffering, took it up into his nature so that it became true penitence, and ministered to a changed nature and a wholly Godward life, that suffering had atoning value for him.

And when you sin, when you allow your lower nature to realise itself in the satisfaction of a base desire: who suffers? the lower You does not suffer; it is the higher You that suffers. It is the ideal man in you, you as you imagine yourself at your highest and divinest, that suffers. It is the ideal in you, which finds but an imperfect expression in your sweetest thoughts, your purest love, your Godward longing—it is here that the burden lies, that the pang is felt, that the sense of alienation from the highest weighs heavily like the foretaste of death.

Brethren, it is the Lamb, which suffered from the

foundation of the world, suffering in you for your sins.

And according as you identify yourself with this highest that is in you, to which the sin is an abomination, and voluntarily accept the penalty, taking it up into your life as humble and sincere penitence, which reinforces your efforts after righteousness, and uplifts you nearer to the heights of God—according as this is so, this suffering has atoning value for you.

And in this great city of ours there is gross, black sin; and who suffers for it? not the lowest, but the highest. Not the poor wretches who wallow in the mire and swelter in the great abomination; but those whose ears are quick to catch the call of the ideal and who are straining upwards towards it; who love purity, who strive for righteousness; who are fighting the giants of evil; who agonise over the squalor, the poverty, the misery, the death with which the city is full. These are they who suffer for the sin of the city. In other words, it is the ideal humanity, imperfectly represented in the community by all the humane activities, the ameliorating energies, the Godward efforts, the holy warfare which is therein—it is this ideal humanity which suffers, which grieves, which agonises, which sacrifices itself. It is the Lamb which was slain from the foundation of the world.

And there you have the secret key of all the progress of mankind, of all the gradual uplifting of mankind into perfect and complete relationship with God, which is eternal life; there is the secret; that is the meaning of it, at bottom; the highest suffering for the lowest; the best for the worst; the strongest for the weakest; the ideal for the fallen; God for man.

I believe in the atoning value of the work of Jesus Christ, His life of obedience, consummated in

His death, the supreme act at once of suffering and of submission; because I believe in the atoning value of the sacrifice of the Lamb that was slain from before the foundation of the world. The historical event, solemn and sublime in itself, acquires an even greater grandeur and sublimity when interpreted by the agelong experience of the developing life of mankind. God was in Christ, the Christ of all the ages, and the Christ of Calvary, God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.

And if you want to know why it was necessary that there should be the objective sacrifice of Christ as well as the subjective sacrifice of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world in the experience of the life of humanity; the satisfactory answer is here.

When the ideal Me, the Christ that indwells me, myself as I am in Christ, suffers by reason of my sin, and accepts the punishment transmuting it into penitence and Godward energies, that suffering has atoning value; but it is not a perfect atonement.

It is not a perfect atonement because it cannot be a perfect satisfaction, even for my own sin, to the law of righteousness which in my sin I have violated; it cannot be a perfect atonement because in me the gold is mingled with the dross, the ideal is only imperfectly realised, and it is fettered by my lower nature whose influence, even when I resist it, I cannot escape.

Perfect atonement can only be made by ideal humanity in all its flower of perfection, unsullied by any sin, undimmed by any surrender to evil, perfect in its relation to God.

God has revealed to me in the Christ of history that such a perfect atonement has been made, by One who, because sinless, because one with God,

because representative of humanity in all its ideal purity and holiness, was able to make it, and was willing to make it. So that a perfect restoration of my life to ideal relationship with God, impossible to me of myself, is possible to me when I link myself on to the Christ.

Brethren, when you gaze upon Jesus as He hangs upon the Cross, you are not gazing upon one who was merely a man; not merely a perfect man, an ideal man, is dying there; you see there in perfect obedience even unto death, the ideal humanity, incarnate, suffering for the sins of the world.

You cannot save yourselves unto eternal life; and that sacrifice of ideal humanity cannot save you, unless you identify yourselves with Him, not in thought only, but in true purpose of heart. But in so far as you do so identify yourself with Him, trust in the Saviourhood of the World's Christ, and name His name, His sacrifice has atoning value for your life and you realise it in terms of redemption from sin, and reconciliation with the Father.

"God so loved the world"—it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation—"God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

Prayer

Oh, Bounteous Love, who willeth not the death of any, but that all should find life in Thee, mercifully hear our prayers, we beseech Thee, and in Thy pitifulness loose from us the bonds of our sin that we may worthily serve Thee and glorify Thy Name. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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